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# PALE AND GLORY

BERNARDUS VOS

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# GRACE AND GLORY

Sermons Preached in the Chapel

OF

Princeton Theological Seminary

BY

GEERHARDUS VOS



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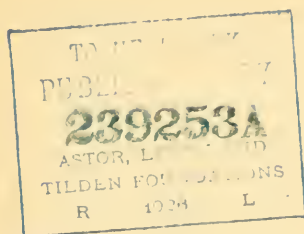
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## **I. The Wonderful Tree**

*Hosea XIV, 8: "I am like a green  
fir-tree; from me is thy fruit  
found."*



THIS prophetic utterance represents one of the two inseparable sides in the make-up of religion. If we say that religion consists of what God is for man, and of what man is for God, then our text in the divine statement, "From me is thy fruit found," stands for the former. To balance it with the other side some such word as that of Isaiah might be taken, "The vineyard of Jehovah of Hosts is the house of Israel." Nor would it be an arbitrary combination of disconnected passages thus pointedly to place the one over against the other. In each case a careful study of the prophet would reveal that not some incidental turn of thought, but an habitual point of view, imparting tone and color to the entire religious experience, had found expression in a characteristic form of statement. The two points of view are supplementary, and, taken together, exhaustive of what the normal relation between God and man involves. Until we learn to unite the Isaiah-type of piety with that of Hosea, we shall not attain a full and harmonious development of our religious life.

Let us this time look at the half-circle of truth expressed by the older prophet. The text stands in the most beautiful surroundings, not merely within Hosea's own prophecy, but in the entire Old Testament. There is a charm about this chapter more easily felt than described. It is like the clear shining after rain,

when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. In what precedes there is much that is hard to understand. Hosea's style is abrupt, full of strange leaps from vision to vision. But here we suddenly pass out of the labyrinth of involved oracles into the clear open. It is a prophecy suffused with deep feeling. All the native tenderness of the prophet, the acute sensitiveness and responsiveness of his emotional nature, rendering him, as it were, a musical instrument expectant of the Spirit's touch, are here in striking evidence; the dissonances of the many prophecies of woe resolve themselves in the sweet harmony of a closing prophecy of promise. And besides, the incomparable light of the future shines upon this chapter. It is bathed in the glory of the latter days, those glories which no prophet could describe without giving forth the finest notes of which his organ was capable. In the repertoire of the prophets the choicest always belongs to the farthest. When their eye rests on the world to come, a miracle is wrought in their speech, so that, in accord with the things described, it borrows from the melodies of the other world.

Still the spell thrown upon our minds by this piece is by no means wholly, or even chiefly, due to its form. It is the peculiar content that captivates the heart as the music captivates the ear. It is not to be expected of any prophet that he shall put into his prophecies relating to the end indiscriminately of his treasure, but chiefly what is to him its most precious part, that which the Spirit of revelation had led him, and him above

others, to apprehend and appreciate. From utterances of this kind, therefore, we get our best perception of what lay nearest to the prophet's heart. So, certainly, it is here with Hosea. In its last analysis, the charm of this chapter is none other than the innate charm of the prophet's most cherished acquaintance with Jehovah. And, applied to the future, this may be summed up in the idea that the possession of Jehovah Himself by his people will be of all the delights of the world to come the chief and most satisfying, the paradise within the paradise of God. The whole description leads up to this and revolves around it. As preparing for it, the return to Jehovah is mentioned first. The end of the great change is that the people may once more live in the presence of God. The prayer the prophet puts upon their lips is, "Take away all iniquity," with the emphasis upon the all, so as to indicate that not otherwise than by the absolute removal of all sin can the cloudless atmosphere be created for the supreme enjoyment of God. And the people pledge that their eyes and hearts henceforth shall be closed to the lure of idols. As a helpless orphan Israel casts herself upon Jehovah's grace: "We will not say anymore to the work of our hands, ye are our gods, for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." But clearest of all the idea appears in the direct speech Jehovah is represented as in that day addressing the people, to the effect that He Himself is eagerly desirous to pour out the riches of his affection upon the heart of Israel and meet her

desire for Him to the utmost measure of its capacity: "I have answered and will regard him; I will be as the dew to Israel: he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They shall revive as the grain, and blossom as the vine; I am like a green fir-tree; from me is thy fruit found."

It will be seen from this that our text is really the climax of this speech of Jehovah. Through the addition of image to image the divine purpose of giving Himself gathers intensity, till at last God appears as a green tree, bearing fruit for his people. This is truly a marvelous representation, well adapted to startle us, when we think ourselves into it. It seems to imply something in God that, in the desire for self-communication exceeds even the strongest affection of a human parent for his children. And yet, my hearers, when reflecting upon it for a moment, can we fail to observe that the marvel in it is nothing else than the heart-miracle of all true religion, the great paradox underlying all God's concern with us. That He, the all-sufficient One, forever rich and blessed in Himself, should, as it were, take Himself in His own hands, making of Himself an object to be bestowed upon a creature, so as to change before the eyes of the prophet into a tree, showering its fruit upon Israel, lavish as nothing in all nature but a tree can be, this surely is something to be wondered at, and something which, though it recurs a thousand times, no experience



or enjoyment ought to be able to rob of its wonder. There is in it more than we convey by the term "communion with God." That admits of relativity, there are degrees in it, but this figure depicts the thing in its highest and deepest possibility, as flowing from the divine desire so to take us into the immediate, intimate circle of his own life and blessedness, as to make all its resources serve our delight, a river of pleasures from his right hand. It might almost seem as if there were here a reversal of the process of religion itself, inasmuch as God appears putting Himself at the service of man, and that with the absolute generosity born of supreme love. This relation into which it pleases God to receive Israel with Himself has in it a sublime abandon; it knows neither restraint nor reserve. Using human language one might say that God enters into this heart and soul and mind and strength. Since God thus gives Himself to his people for fruition, and his resources are infinite, there is no possibility of their ever craving more or seeking more of Him than it is good for them to receive. To deprive religion of this, by putting it upon the barren basis of pure disinterestedness, is not merely a pretense to be wiser than God; it is also an act of robbing God of His own joy through refusing the joy into which He has, as it were, resolved Himself for us. So far from being a matter of gloom and depression, religion in its true concept is an exultant state, the supreme feast and sabbath of the soul.

Of course, in saying this, we do not forget that such religion in its absoluteness can be for a

fallen race but a memory and a hope. The painful and distressing elements that enter into our Christian experience are by no means the product of a perverted and bigoted imagination. Religion need not be in error or insincere when it makes man put ashes on his head, instead of every day anointing his countenance with the oil of gladness. In order to be of any use whatever to us in a state of sin it must assume the form of redemption, and from redemption the elements of penitence and pain are inseparable. Here lies the one source of all the discomfort and self-repression entering into the occupation of man with God, of the sad litany which revealed religion, and to some extent even natural religion, has chanted through the ages. Let no one in a spirit of superficial light-heartedness ridicule it, for, though it may have its excrescences and hypocrisies, in itself it is as inevitable as the joy of religion itself. There is as much reason to pity the man to whom religion has brought no sorrow as the one to whom it has brought no joy. The bitter herbs may not be omitted from the Paschal feast of deliverance. Perhaps the saddest thing to be said of sin is that it has thus been able to invade religion at its very core of joy, injecting into it the opposite of its nature. And yet it is equally true that there is no religious joy like the joy engendered by redemption. Nor is this simply due to the law of contrast which makes the relief of deliverance proportionate to the pain which it succeeds. A more particular cause is at work here. In redemption God opens up Himself to us and sur-

renders his inner life to our possession in a wholly unprecedented manner of which the religion of nature can have neither dream nor anticipation. It is more clearly in saving us than in creating us that God shows Himself God. To taste and feel the riches of his Godhead, as freely given unto us, one must have passed not only through the abjectness and poverty and despair of sin but through the overwhelming experience of salvation. He who is saved explores and receives more of God than unfallen man or even the unfallen angel can. The song of Moses and of the Lamb has in it a deeper exultation than that which the sons of God and the morning-stars sang together for joy in the Creator.

This redemptive self-communication of God is what the prophet has particularly in mind in recording the promise of our text. As already stated, it is a gift of the future, and, of course, the entire future stands to him, as to every prophet, in the sign of redemption. Not as if the future meant only redemption. There is no more characteristic trait in prophecy than that it never makes the crisis of judgment a road to mere restoration of what existed before, but the occasion for the bringing in of something wholly new and unexperienced in the past, so that Jehovah comes out of the conflict, not as one who has barely snatched his work from destruction, but as the great Victor who has made the forces of sin and evil his servants for the accomplishment of a higher and wider purpose. There is an exact correspondence in this respect between the large movement of redemption,

taken as a whole, and the enactment of its principles on a smaller scale within the history of Israel. As the second Adam is greater than the first, and the paradise of the future fairer than that of the past, so the new-born Israel to the prophet's vision is a nobler figure and exists under far more favorable conditions than the empirical Israel of before. Once its Peniel-night is over, it will live in the light and feed upon the goodness of God, and be beautified through its religious embrace of Him. This thought is not unclearly suggested by the very figure of our text. Whatever may be the precise tree species designated by the word "berosh," here rendered as fir-tree, at any rate an evergreen is meant, a tree retaining its verdure in all seasons of the year, never failing in its power to shade and to refresh. The reason is none other than that for which in vs. 6 Israel in its beauty is compared to the olive-tree, a tree likewise perennially clothed with foliage. But there is still something else and far more wonderful about this tree. While by nature not a fruit-bearing tree in the ordinary sense, it changes itself into one before the eyes of the prophet. If nothing more than the idea of fruitfulness were intended, the figure of the olive-tree would have lain closer at hand. But the labor of the olive is a process of nature and bound to the seasons, and evidently what Hosea wishes to express is the concurrence in the same tree of miraculous fruitage, perennial yield, and never-failing shade, for the context emphasizes all three. It is evident that we are



here in another tree-world than that of Palestine; it is the neighborhood of the tree of life of which we read elsewhere that it yields its fruit every month. Plainly Jehovah is thus represented on account of his specific redemptive productiveness, and that in its heightened future form, when new unheard of influences shall proceed from Him for the nourishing and enjoyment of his people. Surely here is something that nature, even God's goodness in nature, could never yield. Perhaps we are not assuming too much by finding still another element in the comparison. In emphasizing the verdant, living character of Jehovah with reference to Israel, the prophet may have had in mind, by way of contrast, the pagan deity from which these qualities of life and fruitfulness and miraculous provision are utterly absent. There used to stand beside the altar of idolatry a pole rudely fashioned in the image of Asherah, the spouse of Baal and goddess of fruitfulness. Nothing could have more strikingly symbolized the barrenness and hopelessness of nature worship than this dead stump in which no bud could sprout, and on which no bird would alight, and of which no fruit was to be found forever. How desperate is the plight of those Canaanites, modern no less than ancient, who must look for the satisfaction of their hunger to the dead wood of the Asherah of nature, because they have no faith in the perpetual miracle of the fruit-bearing fir-tree of redemption.

But let us endeavor to ascertain what concrete meaning the prophet attaches to the image

of the text. What is the fruit that is promised to Israel? To answer this we shall have to go beyond the confines of the text and look around us in the preceding prophecy. The study of this will teach that there are four outstanding features to Jehovah's gift to Israel of the fruition of Himself. We find that it is eminently personal, exclusive, individual, and transforming in its influence.

In the first place, then, Israel's fruition of Jehovah is eminently personal. One might truthfully say that the idea of the possession of one's God in this pointedly personal sense is an idea grown on the soil of revelation, nurtured by the age-long self-communication of God to his own. To be sure, the thought that the fortunes of life must be related to the deity is a common one in Semitic religion. Edom and Moab and Ammon also have joy before their gods. But this is still something far different from having joy in one's God. The latter is Israel's distinction. To have a god and to have God are two things. The difference can be measured by the presence and the absence of the covenant idea in the two different circles. When Jehovah, entering into covenant with Israel says, "I will be unto you a God, and ye shall be unto me a people," this means infinitely more than the trite idea: henceforth ye shall worship me and I will cultivate you. It is the mutual surrender of person to person. Jehovah throws in his lot with Israel, no less truly than Israel's lot is bound up with Jehovah. To express it in terms of the text one would have to

force the figure and say that not merely the fruit, nor merely the tree for its fruit, but the tree itself, as a glorious living being, is the cherished treasure of the owner. The sense of this is so vivid that it has given rise to the phrase "Portion of Israel" as a personal name of God. To the mind of Hosea the most forcible, indeed final and absolute, expression of this precious truth had been reached in the form of the marriage-union between God and Israel. That is simply a closer specification of the covenant idea, and it brings out precisely that side of it on which we are dwelling, the personal aspect of the union involved. While this is from the nature of the case conceived of as mutual, yet the emphasis rests perceptibly on the divine side of it. To be sure, Israel also personally surrendered herself to Jehovah, for we read that she made answer in the days of her youth, and through Jeremiah God declares: "I remember thee for the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." But that was in the beginning; in the sequel Israel soon proved indifferent and faithless. The burden of the message lies in the ascription of this to Jehovah as a permanent, unchangeable disposition. He had not for one moment ceased to be the personal and intimate life companion of Israel. The covenant might be suspended, but so long as it lasted, it could have no other meaning than this, for this lay at its heart. In a number of delicate little touches the prophet reveals his consciousness of it. After the dire calamities of

the judgment have overwhelmed the people and seemingly left nothing further to be swept away, then, as a climax, by the side of which all else shrinks into insignificance, Jehovah announces that He will now personally withdraw from Israel. And corresponding to this, after they have sat many days in the desolation of exile, all but divorced from God, the first and supremely important step in their conversion is that they come trembling unto Jehovah and unto his goodness in the latter days. Even in the Messianic outlook this strongly personal view-point appears. With a peculiarly affectionate turn to the thought the prophet represents the people as in the end seeking David their king, through remembrance of the sure covenant mercies attaching to the name of one who was the man after God's heart, and thus in himself a pledge of the divine love towards the people. In the sphere of external, terrestrial gifts the same principle applies. Here, of course, revealed religion comes nearest to the circle of ideas of paganism. Baal, no less than Jehovah, is supposed to give to his servants the produce of the soil. But what a principle difference between the attitude in which paganism entertains this idea and the spirit in which the prophet expects Israel to cherish it! The pagan cult cleaves to the sod, and buries itself in the heaps of grain and the rivers of oil, and remembers not, except in the most external way, the god who gave. The worship sits loosely upon the life; it is a habit rather than an organic function, and subject to change, if the turn of



fortune requires. Paganized Israel herself is introduced as speaking in the distress of harvest failure, "I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink." "But," says Jehovah, "she knew not that I gave her the grain and the must and the oil and multiplied unto her silver and gold." To Hosea the main principle is that the gifts shall come to the people with the dew of Jehovah's love upon them, deriving their value not so much from what they are intrinsically but from the fact of their being tokens of affection, to each one of which clings something of the personality of the giver. And Jehovah knows such a special art of putting Himself into these favors; He is not imprisoned in them as are the Baals, but freely lives in and loves through them, so as to make them touch the heart of Israel. When the time of her new betrothal comes, and she sees the gifts for her adornment, she exclaims, "Ishi, my husband!" and no longer "Baali, my lord!" Notice the role that nature plays in effecting this; the externals are by no means despised; they have simply ceased to be externals, and been turned into one great sacramental vehicle of spiritual favor. Jehovah sets in motion the whole circuit of nature for the service of his people: "It shall come to pass in that day, I will answer the heavens and they shall answer the earth, and the earth shall answer the grain and the new wine and the oil, and they shall answer Jezreel." The things do not mutely grow, they speak, they answer, they sing, and the voice that travels

through them is the voice of Jehovah. Nature becomes the instrument of grace. That in the spiritual sphere proper everything proceeds along the same line need hardly be pointed out. God speaks comfortably unto Israel to call her back to repentance. He loves her freely, and it is through making her realize this fact that He effects her return. His bridal gifts to Israel are righteousness and mercy and faithfulness and lovingkindness. The mercy that He shows them in their distress is at bottom something far deeper and finer and more spiritualized than the generic sense of pity. It is **chesed**, loving-kindness, that is, mercy intensified a thousand times by the tenderness of an antecedent love. It is not compassion that saves Israel, for compassion, though truly spiritual in itself, lies but on the circumference of that mysterious saving movement that springs in the divine heart from love and grace as its center.

In the second place the possession and enjoyment for which Jehovah offers Himself to Israel are an exclusive relationship. Here the figure of marriage comes into play. Hosea has greatly idealized this figure, at least as compared with the customs of his time. No matter which side we choose in the exegetical dispute as to whether the first three chapters are allegory or recite facts, in either case, be it by a unique experience or through a unique vision, the prophet has produced a marriage ideal fit to be the parable of the covenant. In this idealized form it renders most faithfully the latter's essential features. For emphasizing the pure spirituality of

the relation nothing could be more suitable. In this respect it excels even the figure of fatherhood and sonship. For these originate in nature without free choice. The bond of marriage, as conceived by Hosea, was established through a spiritual process. God, after having created Israel, sought and cultivated her affection. He did this in the beginning and will do it again in the future. So intent is the prophet upon guarding the ideal, ethereal perfection of the union that he studiously avoids representing the coming state of blessedness as a restoration of the previous bond, lest the sin-clouds of the past should project their shadows into it. Therefore the consistency of the figure is disregarded; no reparation, no remarriage is mentioned; the past is blotted out; the sin loses both stain and sting; the future arises as a fresh creation out of the waters of oblivion beneath which Israel's guilt has been buried. It is the new, otherwise unrepeatable, love of the first bloom of youth shedding its fragrance over all: "I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and I will say, Thou art my people, and they shall say, Thou art our God." Now this same idealization also appears in regard to the mutual exclusiveness of the covenant attachment. For we must remember that the prophet affirms this with equal absoluteness with reference to the covenant husband as to the wife, and in this respect custom in his day fell far short of the ideal. When God gives Himself to Israel it is with the clear understanding and promise that He does not do so to any other people. And the exclusive-

ness on the part of God demands an equally exclusive return of love and service such as shall leave no room for strange devotion. Still at this point the reality somehow again transcends the figure. Not that God is husband, but the kind of husband He is, comes under consideration. It is not merely his general honor that is at stake, as would be the case in ordinary human marriage; apart from all else the specifically divine character of his Person and love renders exclusiveness imperative. Even in giving Himself God remains God and requires from Israel the acknowledgment of this. The gift is divine and desires for itself a temple where no other presence shall be tolerated. If we feel God to be ours, then we also feel that no one but God can ever be ours in the same exclusive ineffable sense and that every similar absorption by any purely human relationship would partake of the idolatrous. The only thing that can give a faint suggestion of the engrossing character of the divine hold upon His people is the first awakening of what we call romantic love in the youthful heart with its concentration of all the intensified impulses and forces and desires upon one object and its utter obliviousness to all other interests. This actually in some measure resembles the single-minded, world-forgetful affection we owe to God, and for that very reason is called worship. But it is a state of momentary, supernormal exaltation, which cannot last, because in the creature there is not that which will justify and sustain it. Eternalize this and put into it the divine instead of the human, and



you will have a dim image of what the mutual exclusiveness of devotion between God and man in the covenant bond implies. Here lies the infallible test of what is truly religious in our so-called religion. Everything that lacks the unique reference to God, as its supreme owner and end, is automatically ruled out from that sphere. Yea, anything that is cherished and cultivated apart from God in such a sense that we cannot carry it with us in the Godward movement of our life, becomes necessarily a hindrance, a profanation, and at last a source of idolatry. Man's nature is so built that he must be religious either in a good or in a bad sense. Ill-religious he may, but simply non-religious he cannot be. What he fails to bring into the temple of God, he is sure to set up on the outside, and not seldom at the very gate, as a rival object of worship. And often the more ostensibly spiritual and refined these things are, the more potent and treacherous their lure. The modern man who seeks to save and perfect himself has a whole pantheon of ideals, each of them a veritable god sapping the vitals of his religion. Nay, the prophet goes even farther than this: Jehovah Himself can be made an object of idolatry. If one fails to form a true conception of his character and weaves into the mental image formed of Him the false features gathered from other quasi-divine beings, then, whatever the name employed, be it God or Jehovah or even "the Father," the reality of the divine life is not in it. In such a case it is the perverted image that evokes the worship, instead of the true God.

Hence the prophet does not hesitate to place the calf of Bethel, in which all Israel meant to serve Jehovah, on a line with the idols of the Canaanites, and to call it outright by the name of Baal. This may remind us that the rival interest which interferes with the exclusiveness of our devotion to God is not seldom taken from the sphere of religion itself. Where that happens, the most insidious form of adultery ensues, because it permits the delusion to remain that with an undivided heart we are cleaving to the Lord. Our outgoing activities, our good works of service, our concern with the externals of religion, all this, unless kept in the closest, most vital contact with God Himself, will inevitably tend to acquire a degree of detachment and independence in which it may easily withdraw from God the consecration that ought to go to and the satisfaction that ought to come from Him alone. There is even such a thing as worshipping one's religion instead of one's God. How easily the mind falls into the habit of merely enlisting God as an ally in the fight for creature-betterment, almost oblivious to the fact that He is the King of glory for whose sake the whole world exists and the entire battle is waged! Sometimes it is difficult not to feel that God is reckoned with, chiefly because his name and prestige and resources are indispensable for success in a cause that really transcends Him, and that the time may yet come when as a supernumerary He will be set aside. Is it not precisely this that often makes the atmosphere of Christian work so chill and uninspiring?

Though we compel the feet to move to the accelerated pace of our modern religious machinery, the heart is atrophied and the luke-warm blood flows sluggishly through our veins. Let each one examine himself whether to any extent he is caught in the whirl of this centrifugal movement. The question, though searching, is an extremely simple one: Do we love God for his own sake, and find in this love the inspiration of service, or do we patronize Him as an influential partner under whose auspices we can better conduct our manifold activities in the service of the world? It was not said with a manward reference alone, that if one should bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and give his body to be burned, and not have love, it would profit him nothing. That which is necessary to hallow an act towards our neighbor must be certainly indispensable in any service for rendering it sacrifice well-pleasing unto God.

In the third place the fruition of Himself granted by God to us is individual. There can be no division to it; each must of necessity receive the whole, if he is to receive it at all. This follows from the nature of the gift itself. If the gift consisted of impersonal values, either material or spiritual, the supply might be quantitatively distributed over many persons. But being, as it is, the personal favor of God, it must be poured as a whole into the receptacle of the human heart. The parable of marriage not only teaches that the covenant relation is a monogamic one, but implies besides that it is a bond binding unitary soul to soul. There is an inner

sanctuary of communion, where all else disappears from sight, and the believer shut in with God gazes upon his loveliness, and appropriates Him, as though outside of Him nothing mattered or existed. These may be fugitive moments, and they may be rare in our experience, but we surely must know them, if God's fruit-bearing for us is to be a reality in our lives. The prophet evidently had a feeling for this, although the dispensation of the covenant under which he lived made it far more difficult to attain than in our time. The collective method of procedure pursued at that stage related everything in the first instance to the nation of Israel. To it belong the election, the love, the union with God, the future. It is quite in accordance with this that Israel as a body appears as the bride and wife of Jehovah, or in the terms of a different figure as the son He has called out of Egypt. None the less it yields a pure abstraction, when this is carried to the extreme of a denial of every individual bond between the single Israelite and Jehovah. On the basis of the collective relationship, in which the many unite as one, there must of necessity have sprung up an individual attachment, in which the single believer and Jehovah directly touched each other. As there was private sacrifice alongside of the public ritual service, so there must have flourished personal worship and affection for God in the hearts of the pious. The devotional fragrance wafted to us from so many a page in the Old Testament bears abundant witness to this. But, while no true Israelite could be entirely without this,



there existed doubtless many degrees in the individualizing of what was so largely a common possession. The nature of the prophetic office brought with it a certain detachment from the mass and a peculiar intimacy with Jehovah. And yet the note of individualism is not equally strong in all the prophets. It is interesting to observe where and when and how it emerges. Its two great exponents before the exile are Hosea and Jeremiah. These two speak not only from and for Jehovah but also to Jehovah. They are pre-eminently the prophets of prayer. In the case of each there appears to be some connection between the temperament of the prophet and the cultivation of this element. Both exceptionally endowed in their emotional nature, they instinctively sought, and under the influence of the Spirit were enabled to find, what could satisfy this deep instinct. Religion as centered in the heart cannot but incline towards individualism, for the heart with its hidden feelings is the most incapable of duplication of all the factors that enter into it. Belief and intent of will may be standardized; the emotional reaction is like the wind of heaven: we hear the sound thereof, yet know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so it is with the world of religious feeling; it has a coloring and tone of its own in each individual child of God. Hosea being of a most tender and impressionable temperament was on that account chosen to secure for the covenant-bond in his own life, and through his influence in the life of others, that sweet privacy and inwardness which forms the

most precious possession of every pious soul. Here lies the cause of that vivid, life-like personification to which the prophet subjects the people of Israel, putting words upon their lips expressing a mode of feeling such as, strictly speaking, only an individual can experience. It is his own heart that the prophet has put into the body of Israel. The construction is in the plural, but the spirit is in the singular, and it needs only to be translated back into the singular, to render it a most appropriate speech for every believer in addressing Jehovah: "Come and let us return unto Jehovah; for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live before Him. And let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah: His going forth is sure as the morning; and He will come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth." And thus the prophet, and through him doubtless others, had the wonderful experience that the God of Israel could give Himself to a single person with the same individual interest and undivided devotion, as if that person were the only one to whom His favor extended. This is necessary to complete the fruition of God. Every child of God, no matter how broad his vision and enlarged his sympathies, is conscious of carrying within himself a private sanctuary, an inner guest-chamber of the heart, where he desires to be at times alone with God and have his Savior to himself. So instinctive and irrepressible is the craving

for this, that it may easily give rise to a sort of spiritual jealousy, making it difficult to believe that the God who has given Himself to millions of others should receive us alone into absolute intimacy and show us the secret of His covenant. Does it seem improper to pray, "Come Lord to me alone, and close the door, that I may have Thee to myself for a day and an hour?" Should this feeling come to us and perplex us, the best way to meet it is to consider the existence of the same mystery in the relation of earthly parents to their children. It matters not whether there be one or ten, each child has the full affection of the father's and mother's heart. If we that are creatures can experience the working of this miracle in our finite lives, how much more can the infinite God be present to a countless number of souls and give to each one of them the same ineffable gift? He is God and not man, the Holy One, both in our midst and in our hearts.

Finally, the possession and enjoyment of Jehovah by Israel has according to the prophet a transforming effect. Here we touch upon the greatest wonder in our fruition of God. This tree, unlike the probation-tree of paradise, has the veritable power of making man like unto God. Those who dwell together in the holy companionship of the covenant grow like unto each other. There is a magic assimilative influence in all the spiritual intimacies of life. But here the mystery is deepest, because it plays between God and man. It works in both directions: as it has caused God's gift of Himself to us to as-

sume even the form of the incarnation, in which He became flesh of our flesh and bone of our bones, so in the opposite direction it makes us partakers of the divine nature, putting upon our souls God's image and superscription. This is not, of course, the fusing of two entities; such a thought lay far from Hosea's mind. It is the interpenetration of the two conscious lives of God and man, each holding the other in the close embrace of a perfect sympathy. The prophet has developed this thought also in connection with the marriage idea. As the wife becomes like unto the husband, and the husband unto the wife, through the daily association of years, so Israel, the wife of Jehovah, is bound to undergo an inner change through which the features of God are slowly but surely wrought out in her character. The beauty of the Lord God is put upon her. This law works with absolute necessity. The prophet traces it even in the shameful pagan cult, which in other respects is the caricature of the true religion of Israel. Those who come to Baal-Peor and consecrate themselves to the shameful thing become abominable like that which they love. The principle laid down applies to all idolatry, open or disguised; whatever man substitutes for the living God as an object of his supreme devotion not only turns into his master, but ends with becoming a superimposed character fashioning him irresistibly into likeness with itself. There is no worshipper but bears the image of his God. The self-sovereignty and independence affected by sin are not allowed to exist. With a sure nemesis



religion reclaims its own and in each one of its pseudo-forms thrusts man back into the attitude of worship. Likeness to God, however, is not merely the effect of his giving Himself to us, it is also the condition on which the reality of such divine self-communication is suspended. To have God and to be owned by God in the profound covenant sense would be impossible and result in doing violence to the nature of God and man alike, if the character of man could not be made to fit into the nature and will of God. The basis of all religion is that man must exist in the image of God. Only on this basis can the further assimilation proceed. But the prophet has given this thought the warm baptism of affection. A power of conscious love is at work in the process. To bring out his own image in Israel is the delight of Israel's lover and husband. This is the reason why the likeness is represented as beginning with the day of betrothal, and the chief qualities entering into it appear as a bridal gift from God to Israel, God giving her, as it were, of his own attributes: "I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in mercies, and thou shalt know Jehovah." That the gift is a gift of likeness appears also in this, that it is equivalent to the knowledge of Jehovah. Hence the emphasis thrown on the need of knowledge in Hosea's prophecy. God is declared to have known Israel in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. And of Israel it is required, "Thou shalt know no God but me." In both cases the meaning of the word goes far beyond the

intellectual sphere; to know is not a mere act or process of becoming informed, but an act of sympathetic absorption in the other's character. It describes Jehovah's original choice of Israel as a most affectionate determination of what Israel was to be, and the attitude of the people as a passionate searching after the perfections of the divine nature. It is that self-projection of the lover into the beloved which is more than knowledge through the understanding. Hence also the trait of eagerness which the prophet ascribes to it. It is not a state of contentment, but partakes of the extreme restlessness of love in motion: "O let us know, let us follow on to know Jehovah!" This is to such an extent the heart and soul of the marriage, that the one great adultery consists in this: that Israel does not know, and does not care to know Jehovah. For that is to fail of the end for which the covenant exists; it makes the marriage idle and fruitless. And finally, my hearers, from this falls some light upon the mystery that a finite creature can receive and possess the infinite God. To speak of giving and possession and enjoyment is after all but speaking in figures. When we try to resolve the figure into the thing itself, the reality grows so great and deep that it transcends our minds, and we must resign ourselves to an experience without understanding. But here is something that we can at least make relatively clear to ourselves: the fruition of God consists in the reception by us of his likeness into ourselves, so that his beauty of character becomes literally our own. So

close and so precious an identification no other love can dream of and no other union attain. In it the fruit and the tree become one; we feel and taste that the Lord is for our delight. And when that picture, which Hosea saw as in a glass darkly through the tracings of the imagery of lily and olive-tree and grain and wine, when that picture shall have resolved itself for us into the spiritual realities of the life to come, then also the covenant climax will have been reached, every sacrament shall fall away, and our fruition shall be of God within God; we shall at last be like Him, because we know Him as He is.



## **II.   Hungering and Thirsting After Righteousness**

*The Gospel according to Matthew, V, 6: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."*

THE Sermon on the Mount is rightly accorded a chief place in the teaching of our Lord. It carries a weight of authority, sets an ethical standard, and reveals heights and depths of the religious life, nowhere surpassed in the Gospels. The Evangelists in recording it seem to have been aware of this. Matthew does not, as on other occasions, introduce the discourse with the conventional phrase "Jesus said," but with the quite solemn statement "And He opened his mouth," thus giving us to understand that the utterance of these words was to Jesus' own mind an act to which He deliberately proceeded. And Luke conveys somewhat of the same impression by the introductory statement, "And He lifted up his eyes on the disciples and said." Jesus never spoke without a clear sense of the consequence with which his words were fraught. And blessed is the preacher of whom it can be truly said that ministering the Word of God is to him an holy task. But, while the sense of this was always present with our Lord, it was heightened on this occasion. This was the first time that He set Himself to teach His disciples. Here He assumes that peculiar ministry of breaking the bread of life for his own, which He has ever since unceasingly performed through the ages, and even now performs for us, as in these moments we gather round his feet to receive his teaching. In fact it is here for the first time that



the term "disciples" occurs in Matthew's Gospel. Hence also the statement that our Lord "sat down," and, having made the disciples draw near, so taught them. The sitting posture, with the hearers standing around, was characteristic of the relation between teacher and pupils, in distinction from the standing position, marking the prophet or gospel-herald.

To note these details of description is not of merely historical interest, but also of practical religious importance, because it may warn us at the outset against a view all too commonly prevailing concerning the purpose of this "Sermon on the Mount." The sermon is often represented as a succinct summary of Jesus' message. It passes for an epitome of Christianity, the teststone of what is essential to our religion. All that is not here, we are told, can without detriment be neglected. Every later type of Christian life and teaching is to be judged, not by the standard of Scripture as a whole, nor even by the authority of the words of Christ as a whole, but by the content of this one discourse. This deplorable error is due to more than one cause. The beauty and glory of truth concentrated here may easily beget a feeling that all else in the New Testament is in comparison of minor value. A second motive coming into play is that many people in the matter of religious belief wholly abandon themselves to their ungoverned tastes and feelings. They scorn every hard and fast rule of faith and practice. Even submission to the indiscriminate teaching of Jesus they find distasteful. At the same time,



unwilling to appear entirely emancipated from all historical bonds of faith, they fall back upon some choice portion of the Gospel, preferably the Sermon on the Mount, and cling to it as to the last remaining shreds of the garment of creed, barely sufficient to cover the nakedness of their subjectivity. It is thus that the Sermon on the Mount has become the creed of the creedless. But by far the most influential force driving people to such a view comes from the flattery it supplies to the natural man. It flatters him by taking for granted that he needs no more than the presentation of this high ideal, and that Jesus does him the honor of thinking him capable of realizing it by his own natural goodness. And, last of all, it is not so much what people find in the Sermon on the Mount, it is what they congratulate themselves upon not finding there, that renders them thus enamored of its excellence. It is because they dislike the story of the helplessness of sin, of man's utter condemnation in the sight of God, and the insistence upon the necessity of the cross, it is because of all this that they evince such eagerness to adopt as their exclusive creed a portion of the Gospel from which in their opinion these offensive things are absent. Now all such forget that both Jesus and the Evangelist expressly relate the Sermon on the Mount to the disciples, and consequently place back of what is described in it the process of becoming a disciple, the whole rich relationship of saving approach and responsive faith, of calling and repentance and pardon and acceptance and the following of

Jesus, all that makes the men and women of the Gospel such disciples and Jesus such a Lord and Savior as this and other records of his teaching imply. It is therefore folly to insist that no specific doctrine of salvation is here. It is present as a living doctrine incarnate in the Person of Jesus. We are apt to forget that in the days of our Lord's flesh there was no need for that explicit teaching about the Christ found in the Epistles of the New Testament. At that time He, the real Christ, walked among men and exhibited in his intercourse with sinners more impressively than any abstract doctrine could have done the principles and the process of salvation. If we have but eyes to see, we shall find our Savior in the out-door scenes of the Gospels no less than within the walls of the school of the Epistle to the Romans. And we shall find Him too in the Sermon on the Mount. For this discourse throughout pre-supposes that the disciples here instructed became associated with Jesus as sinners needing salvation, and that their whole life in continuance is lived on the basis of grace. At the beginning stand the beatitudes, engraven in golden script upon its portal, reminding us that we are not received by Jesus into a school of ethics but into a kingdom of redemption. It is blessedness that is promised here, and the word does not so much signify a state of mind, as that great realm of consummation and satisfaction, which renders man's existence, once he has entered into it, serene and secure for evermore. And again, foremost among the beatitudes stand those that empha-

size the emptiness, the absolute dependence of man upon divine grace. As at the dawn of the gospel Mary sang: "He has put down princes from their thrones, and has exalted them of low degree; the hungry He has filled with good things and the rich He has sent empty away," so here those pronounced blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, and they that hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is in no wise to the self-satisfied mind that the Lord addresses Himself; his call is not a call to exertion, not even to exertion in holiness; it were too little to say that it is an invitation to receive; it goes farther than that; it amounts to the declaration that the consciousness of having nothing, absolutely nothing, is the certain pledge of untold enrichment. So much is salvation a matter of giving on God's part that its best subjects are those in whom his grace of giving can have its perfect work. The poor in spirit, those that mourn, the meek and the hungry, these are made to pass before our eyes as so many typical forms of its embodiment. And because this is so, they are here also introduced as having the promise of the infinite. To be a child of God and a disciple of Jesus means to hold in one's hand the treasures of eternity. Look for a moment at the second clauses of these beatitudes. Some of the things spoken of may, in a relative sense, be obtained in the present life. Comfort and mercy and the vision of God and sonship are bestowed during our pilgrimage on earth. As a matter of fact, however, these things are here held in prospect not in

relative but in absolute measure. In the consummate life only can it become true that the meek inherit the earth, that the eyes of the pure behold the beatific vision of God, that the hungry and thirsty are satisfied with righteousness. This absolute character of the promise writes the principle of redemption large on the face of the Sermon on the Mount. To join together after this manner creature-emptiness and the riches of divine benediction is the prerogative of God the Savior. So long as this voice of the beatitudes is distinctly heard, it will not be possible to find any other religion here than the religion of salvation through the grace of God in Christ.

But is it not true, you are perhaps inclined to ask, that at least from the words of our text the opposite view receives a measure of support? "Righteousness" — in this word certainly the stress seems to be laid on ethical conduct without any particular admixture of the redemptive element. Men are willing to admit that, so far as the specifically religious qualities are concerned, our attitude must be a receptive one, leaving all the energizing to God. When, however, the sphere of the moral life is reached, the principle seems no longer to apply, this being the field of co-operation between the divine and the human. That people are rash to draw such a conclusion is partly due to the modish social coloring which the term "righteousness" receives at the present day. But we may not determine its meaning for our text in the light of this modern association. The important ques-



tion to answer is what meaning the word carried to the mind of Jesus. As soon as this is done, we shall soon discover that no greater mistake could be made from Jesus' point of view than to assume that in the matter of righteousness the divine is less and the human more than in other relations. It would be crude, to be sure, straightway to inject into our text the doctrine of Paul according to which righteousness is something wrought out in Christ and transferred to us by imputation. And yet, it would be a far more serious mistake to suppose that our Lord's idea of righteousness and that of Paul differed in principle and did not grow from the same root. There need be no difficulty in showing that Jesus, and in fact all preceding revelation, carefully laid the basis for this crowning structure of Apostolic revelation. In order to do this let us note in the first place that righteousness is in Scripture an idea saturated with the thought of God. Throughout the Old Testament this is so. It is a commonplace of its teaching, especially in the prophets, that there can be no true obedience of heart and life without the constant presence to the mind of man of the thought of Jehovah. Not only is ethics without religion a fragmentary thing; even more important is the principle that in such a case it lacks the true quality of right, the inner essence of what renders it conformable to its very idea. Righteousness is the opposite of sin, and as the reference to God is inseparable from the conception of sin, so the reference to God is in precisely the same manner inherent in the idea of righteousness. To put it very plainly: If there



were no God to see and judge and punish, one might perhaps still continue to speak of good and evil, meaning thereby what is beneficial or injurious, subject to the approval or disapproval of men, but it would be meaningless to speak of sin on such a supposition. And so, by equal reasoning, while what is commonly called good might without the existence of God be conceivable in the world, yet it could not properly bear the name of righteousness, for the simple reason that, in order to deserve this name, according to the Biblical way of thinking, it needs first to be placed in the light of the divine nature, the divine will, the divine judgment. At the very birth of the people of God this principle was embedded deep in their life, when God said to Abraham: "I am El-Shaddai, walk thou before me, then shalt thou be blameless." To walk before God means so to walk as to have the thought of God's presence and supervision constantly in mind, and to shape one's conduct accordingly. Our Lord's whole teaching on the subject of righteousness is but one emphatic re-affirmation and further development of the same principle. Although the religious atmosphere in his day was surcharged with the notions of law-keeping and merit and retribution, there was lacking the vivid consciousness of God as a perpetual witness and interested participant in every moral transaction. The automaton of the law had taken the place of the living God. Well might our Lord quote the words of the prophet Isaiah: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Alas, this fault with which Jesus had to contend is not so ex-

clusively peculiar to the spirit of that age as we might perhaps be inclined to assume. A Jew lives in you and me and in every human heart by nature. If we ever were tempted to think ourselves able to fulfill the law of God, was it not perhaps for this reason—that the sense of God's absolute claim upon us and knowledge of us had become dim to our conscience? Since, then, this fault reappears in every sinner, the Preacher of the Mount repeats his sermon in the ears of each generation. He stands to plead the right of God, no matter what substitutes for Him we may have put up in our lives, nay not even though it were, as in the case of Judaism, a counterfeit of God's own law. And, great physician that He is, He directs his probe straight to the root of the disease. Christ drives us back into the inner chambers of our consciousness, where God and we are alone, and good and evil assume a proportion and significance never dreamt of before. The law in the hands of Jesus becomes alive with God's own personality. Majestic and authoritative, He is present in every commandment, so absolute in his demands, so observant of our conduct, so intent upon the outcome, that the thought of giving to Him less than heart and soul and mind and strength in the product of our moral life ceases to be tolerable to ourselves. Much has been preached and written about the internal character of the law-observance which the Sermon on the Mount requires. Truly, it does teach with powerful emphasis that the righteousness is in the intent and disposition, not first in the

outward act, just as the sin is not committed first when the hand reaches out to strike, but when anger surges up in the heart. But we do not, I am afraid, realize with sufficient clearness what is the ultimate reason for this internalizing emphasis. Why are evil and good with such insistency pushed back into the region of the heart? The reason is none other than that in the heart man confronts God. In the recesses of the inner man, where deep calls unto deep, where the Lawgiver and the creature are face to face, there and there alone the issue of righteousness and of sin can be decided. Nor does this merely mean that the conscience is brought under the direct gaze and control of the will of God. It is the divine nature lying back of the divine will in the light of which the creature is led to place itself. The inner man enters, if we may so speak, into the inner forum of the Most High. There God, besides requiring obedience to his will, is heard to ask conformity to his moral nature. The law is perceived to coincide with what He is. The majesty, the inevitableness, the self-evidencing and self-enforcing power of the eternal are put into it. To fulfill the law becomes but another form of the imperative, to be like unto God. It is God's inalienable right as God to impress his character upon us, to make and keep us reflectors of his infinite glory. But in a state of sin this can only intensify a thousand times the consciousness of man's utter inability even to begin to realize what nevertheless is the very core of his end in life, the sole ultimate reason

for his existence. Thus apprehended the range and scope of the moral circle drawn around our being become enormous, so much so indeed that they would almost seem to exceed the possibilities of frail human nature. So long as man's moral life is not illumined by this central glory of the nature of God, it may remain possible for the illusion to spring up that the sinner can at least aspire towards fulfilment of the law. He then imagines that the command is relaxed and lowered to the limitations of his abnormal state. The limitless perspective, all that makes for the eternal seriousness and solemnity of the values of righteousness and sin, are forgotten. "To be righteous" acquires the restricted meaning of being law-like, instead of God-like. Sin also loses its absolute character of disharmony with the divine nature. It appears a mere shortness in one's account, easily rectifiable by future extra-payments. To all this delusion Jesus puts an end by the simple word: "Ye shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," and: "Thus shall ye pray: Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth." And, still further, the purpose of this demand of God-likeness is not to be primarily sought in the desirability for man of patterning himself after the highest example; it has its deeper ground in the right of God to possess and use us as instruments for the revelation of his supreme glory. If God desires to mirror Himself in us, can it behoove man to offer Him less than a perfect reflection? Shall we say, that He must overlook the little blemishes, the minor sins, the mixed



aspirations, the half-hearted efforts, must take the will for the deed, and an imperfect will at that? Or shall we confess with the speaker in Job that the heavens are not clean in his sight? Once this point of view is adopted, our whole estimate of sin and righteousness undergoes a radical change. We then begin to measure and appraise them in their bearing on God and their value for Him. Obedience becomes sacrifice; the light that is in us no longer shines for our own delectation, but in order that through the perception of our good works by men glory may come to our Father in heaven. Here lies also the reason why, notwithstanding all the emphasis placed on the secretness and inwardness of righteousness, our Lord none the less insists upon the necessity of works as essential to the issue of the moral process. Because it does not exist for itself, therefore the right must leap to the light of day. Jesus, no more than Paul, would have assented to the view that in sanctification the good will or intention is the sole thing required. The tree of righteousness is planted in us by God for his own sake, and consequently He delights in its blossoms and desires to eat of its fruit.

We have now explored a little of the length and breadth and height and depth of what the Sermon on the Mount proclaims as the whole duty of man. The task of fulfilling this is so stupendous that a sinless being might almost contemplate it with misgiving. Where, then, shall the ungodly and sinner appear? Can our Lord have meant that it is even remotely possible for



the disciple by his own strength to attain unto this? Our text implies the very opposite. No, not the possession of such a righteousness is characteristic of the members of the kingdom, but that they hunger and thirst after it. Notice sharply the implications of the striking figure employed. It implies, of course, in the first place that the disciple has not in himself, and is conscious of not having, the thing described. That, however, is only the negative side; to the absence there corresponds the desire for its presence. And a very specific kind of desire is referred to. Its strength is emphasized, and that not merely in general, but in the very particular sense of its being an elemental desire, a life-craving, in which the deepest instincts of the disciple assert themselves. To hunger and thirst after a thing means the recognition that without that thing there can be no life. It involves that in this one desire and its satisfaction the whole meaning of life is centered, that the whole energy of life is directed towards it, that the goal of life is identified with it. To the sense of this fundamental spiritual craving all other things are obliterated. As to the hungry and thirsty gold and silver become worthless, so to the disciple in whom this desire has awakened, the wealth of the universe, were he offered it, would have no attraction. And let us remember that this intensified desire has for its object the righteousness of God as previously described. What renders this thing desirable is the vision of it as associated with God. In its ultimate analysis it is the passion

for God Himself. Here is the cry of the Psalmist: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee," translated into terms of ethics. Still further, the form of hunger and thirst which the desire assumes presupposes the clearest conceivable perception of the nature of its object. As there is no more vivid picture of the nourishing and refreshing power of food and drink than that which stands before the imagination of a hungry and thirsty person, so there is no truer, no more adequate reproduction of God's own idea of righteousness than that which exists in the mind that hungers and thirsts after the manner here portrayed. Herein lies one of the chief glories of the work of redemption, that it produces in the heart and mind of the sinner such a profound, ineffaceable impression of the realities in God. Nothing will lay so bare the foundations of our relationship to Him as the experience of salvation. The thing spoken of in the text appears nowhere else in such an intense form as it does through its connection with sin. The beginning of hungering and thirsting after righteousness lies in the birth of conviction of sin. In fact the presence of this element in it is what distinguishes true, deep repentance from every kind of superficial regret for the secondary consequences of sin. True repentance strips sin of all that is accidental. It resembles an inner chamber where no one and nothing else is admitted except God and the sinner and his sin. Into that chamber all the great penitents like David and Paul and Augustine

and Luther have entered, and each one in the bitter anguish of his soul has borrowed the words of the Psalmist: "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest." A repentant sinner acquits God and condemns himself. And for the very reason that his consciousness of sin is God-centered, he is also alive to its inward seriousness. He learns to trace it in the recesses and abysses of his inmost life, where even the eye of self-scrutiny would otherwise scarcely penetrate, but in which the eyes of God are at home, where all our iniquities stand naked before Him and our secret sins in the light of his countenance. If it is characteristic of sin to excuse itself, it is no less characteristic of repentance to scorn all subterfuge and to judge of itself, as it were, with the very veracity of God. Herein indeed is shown the first grace of God to an awakened sinner that He lets in upon the soul this cleansing flood of moral truth. It is a painful experience, but even through the pain the penitent feels that his relation towards God has been in principle rectified, that the sorrow of repentance is a sorrow after God Himself. Without that much of faith there is no repentance, by that much of faith gracious repentance differs from the remorse of the hopelessly lost. And from such saving penitence there is but one more step to the recognition that the claims of the divine righteousness in their widest extent must be satisfied. To a mind thus disposed the thought of atonement is

no longer an offense or foolishness, but something commending itself by its inherent justice. The doctrine of satisfaction ages before it was elaborated by religious thinkers had vindicated itself, as it still continues to do, to thousands of hearts in the bitter theology of repentance. The fact of sin, while as such irrevocably accomplished, yet so far as the guilt is concerned must be undone, if God is to remain the God of sinners. Here the truth taught by Jesus leads directly to Paul's doctrine of atonement and justification. To the heart that has had the Sermon on the Mount interpreted to itself by the Holy Spirit there is no other solution and refuge than the cross underneath which Paul found shelter. To such as hunger and thirst after righteousness the flesh of the Son of Man is meat and his blood is drink, indeed.

But the principle expressed in our text reaches still farther out. The hungering and thirsting most assuredly also include a desire to exhibit the righteousness of discipleship in a sanctified life. And this Christian pursuit of holiness likewise is centered in God. It is not as if in justification the divine grace, and in sanctification human endeavor, were the sole factor to be reckoned with. Much rather in sanctification itself the old alternative again presents itself, whether in all its parts, in the acting upon by God and in the being moved to responsive action of the believer, the divine glory or human merit shall be the principal concern. There is a striving after moral excellence in which the selfish sinful nature most vigorously



reasserts itself, involving merely a transition from the gross and carnal to the more refined and elusive type of sin. The true disciple does not seek to be made better for his own glory but in the interest and for the glory 'of God. He feels with Paul that he must apprehend, because he was apprehended for that very purpose. The image of God restored in the soul cannot help turning back towards its original. The new man is created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth. The believer, therefore, sanctifies himself, that God's purpose may not be frustrated in him, but find glorious fruition. Only he does so in constant reliance on divine grace. It were a mistake to confine the province of faith to justification. All progress in holiness depends on it. It is the element, the atmosphere in which the Christian lives, that which imparts to his works their sacrificial character and makes them pleasing to God. And, because, thanks to God, it is deeper in him than his deepest sin, even when he fails and falls, he does not despair, nor is utterly forsaken. God's witness remains in him; he can say with Peter: "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee!"

Finally, the Lord here assures the hungry and thirsty ones, that they shall be satisfied. Every instinctive desire, when normal, carries in itself the knowledge that there is that which can satisfy it. The great gifts of God and the great desires of life have been created for each other, and call for each other. If this be true in the natural world, it is equally true in the spiritual world, in the sphere of redemption. The



craving described in our text is a prophecy; it tells of a law in the kingdom of God, a sure creative appointment, out of which, twin-children of the divine grace, the hunger after righteousness and the righteousness itself are born. It is God, and God alone, who can produce in the deepest heart of man a thing so instinctive as what is here spoken of. No sinner can give this to himself. If we feel it at all, to however slight a degree, it is from no other cause than that the love of God has found us, and the breath of the Spirit Creator has blown upon us, quickening us into newness of life. If this were a desire artificially awakened or stimulated by man, there could be no assurance of either the existence or the satisfying character of its object. Even in the case of our noblest and most elevating desires after the creature, we too often make sad experience of the failure of our ideals to meet the expectation. The reason is that in our dreams we ourselves are the creators of the excellence we crave, and because we cannot also create the satisfaction, we hunger in vain. But it is different here. He that gave the thirst likewise provides the water, and the one exactly meets the other. It is not the will of our Heavenly Father that any longing in our hearts, prompted by Himself, and therefore sincerely seeking Him, shall perish unsatisfied. A satisfying righteousness therefore must be provided for the people of God. And it must be provided outside of us. To eat means to be nourished from without. Since the sinner is devoid of all righteousness, it is self-evident, that the source

of his supply must be sought beyond the confines of his own evil and empty nature. For it to be otherwise would mean that hunger could be stilled with hunger. Our Lord's meaning obviously is that the coming order of things, the new kingdom of God, brings with itself, chief of all blessings, a perfect righteousness, as truly and absolutely the gift of God to man as is the entire kingdom. What is true of the kingdom, that no human merit can deserve, no human effort call it into being, applies with equal force to the righteousness that forms its center. It is God's creation, not man's. The prophet recognized it as such when, despairing of sinful Israel, he promised that in the future, in the new covenant, God would remember the sin no more, and would write his law upon the tablets of the heart. Our Lord here simply declares that what prophets and psalmists saw from afar is on the point of becoming real. The acceptable year of Jehovah is about to begin. His beatitudes are the evangel, giving answer across the ages to the prophecies of old. It means that with comfort and riches and mercy and sonship and the vision of God, righteousness will be given in abundance to a destitute people. True, Jesus does not enter here upon any description of the method by which this is to be accomplished. As little as He specifies what will bring comfort in the place of mourning, does He tell how righteousness will banish sin. But does not the very fact of his foregoing to tell this afford a presumption that He is conscious of carrying the source and substance of all these things in his own Person? The

same Jesus who immediately afterwards in interpreting the law puts side by side with the commandment of God his sovereign, "I say unto you," the same Jesus here takes into his hands all the riches of prophecy, as only the God of prophecy can take them, and disposes of them as his own sovereign gift: "Theirs is the kingdom," and "They shall be filled." What gives Him the right to speak thus, not merely in the sphere of power, but also in the sphere of righteousness? As God He could change sickness into health, and mourning into joy, but even as God He cannot change sin and guilt into righteousness by a mere fiat of his will. When, nevertheless, He here declares that this will be done, the reason is that in his own life, his life of a servant, this greatest of all tasks is being accomplished. In one sense the Sermon on the Mount was a sermon preached out of his own personal experience. The righteousness He described was not a distant ideal, it was an incarnate reality in Himself. He alone of all mankind fulfilled the law in its deepest purport and widest extent. His keeping of it proceeded from that sanctuary of his inner life where He and the Father always beheld each other's face. He made it his meat and drink to do the will of God. His human nature was an altar from which the incense of perfect consecration rose ceaselessly day and night. He submitted to the cross and endured the shame, not merely on our behalf, but first of all in order that not one jot or one tittle of the divine justice should fall to the ground. He not only hungered and thirsted but was sat-

isfied with the travail of his soul. And now you and I can come and take of the bread and water of life freely. Through justification we are even in this life filled with the fulness of his merit, and appear to God as spotless and blameless as though sin had never touched us. Through sanctification his holy character is impressed upon our souls, so that, notwithstanding our imperfections, God takes a true delight in us, seeing that the inner man is changed from day to day after the likeness of Christ. And the full meaning of our Lord's promise we shall know in the last day, when He shall satisfy Himself in us by presenting us to God perfect in body, soul and Spirit. Then shall come to pass the word that is written: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." For we shall behold God's face in righteousness and be satisfied, when we awake, with his image.





### **III. Seeking and Saving the Lost**

*The Gospel according to Luke,  
XIX, 10: "For the Son of Man  
came to seek and to save that  
which was lost."*

THE words of our text are Jesus' own commentary on the event described in the preceding verses. His meeting with Zacchaeus and, as a result of this, the publican's salvation, were in the last analysis due to the fact, that the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost. And in the light of this interpretation the event itself in turn becomes a commentary upon the Savior's ministry in the largest sense, both upon that which He served while on earth and upon that which He now fulfills, walking through the lands and the ages, as He once walked through the fields and cities of Palestine. Neither this nor any other occurrence in the Gospel-history was a casual thing. It is true, these days of our Lord's flesh which He lived among his countrymen, acting and acted upon, were a real concrete piece of life interwoven with the life of Israel. They belong to that age and generation as truly as any section of human history can be said to belong to the times in which it happened. But it is also true that this is not common history, but sacred, redemptive history, which means that there runs through it, from beginning to end, a special design, ordering its course, shaping its frame, and fixing its issues, so as to make of it a proper stage for the enactment of the great mystery of redemption, whose spectators and participants were not merely the Jews of that age but the inhabitants of all subsequent ages. Nothing is casual here; every

moment, every circumstance, every person that our Lord touched became fraught by that touch with a profound actuality and an eternal significance. How marvelously adapted was the setting of these scenes to serve their unique purpose! What sharp contrasts of human state and condition were here brought together! What pronounced types of sin, exhibiting in their development the root-principles of all evil, appear side by side! The Pharisee and the Publican come together to the temple of God! Truly, in this world of the Jewish land a microcosmic picture was presented of the realms of sin and suffering and sorrow and death. And because this is so, you and I can come to the story of two thousand years ago and find a present salvation there, an ever open door to the house of peace and hope. These are not strange, outlandish scenes and surroundings we are invited to; it is the familiar ground of sin and salvation; those who people it are flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and the Savior, who comes to meet them, in their persons meets us and transacts his business with us individually about matters of eternal importance.

For a few moments with the statement of our text in mind let us look at what passed between Zacchaeus and the Savior. The time is that of Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem shortly before the great Passover in which all things were to be fulfilled. These were the last hours of the day during which it is possible to work; closer and closer drew near for Him that night of suffering and death in which it is not given to any

man to work. Could one have wondered, if in this critical hour our Lord's thoughts had been wholly turned forward and inward, if, oblivious to his surroundings, He had been intent upon the tremendous experience of his passion with which He was now almost face to face? We do find Him faithful and busy in the outward duty until the last moment. As He loved his own until the end, so it may be said that He sought his own until the darkness of death closed in upon Him. But a moment ago He had helped the blind beggar at the entrance to Jericho, and, scarcely within the city, a publican becomes the object of his quest. Notice how vividly the sense of a specific duty, here and now to be performed, is present to the Savior's mind, for He announces to Zacchaeus: "Today I must abide at thine house." His times and ways and works were not his own but the Father's who had sent Him. But let us further notice the precise expression that principle receives in the statement: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." There is no need of asking for the moment, whence He came; the fact of his coming in itself sufficiently claims our attention. For this "coming" means his coming into the world; it covers his entire earthly life; He was born for this purpose, and this purpose only, to seek and save the lost. Never in all human history was there such an absolute concentration of life upon a single specific task as that which our Lord here affirms of Himself. Every man comes into the world to work out a design of God in his existence. But in the case of each one of us this design



embraces a number of various ends, all of which we legitimately pursue, and in all of which we serve the will of God. Our Lord's life was a human life which derived its meaning from beginning to end from his vocation as a Savior; in seeking and saving its significance exhausted itself. To that even the most sacred and private concerns of his soul with God, his prayer, his trust, all his intercourse with the Father, were wholly subservient. The personal was swallowed up in the one great devotion to the work of God. Into this the full stream of his strength flowed, from this its hidden sources were nourished: He made it his meat and his drink to do the will of his Father in heaven. He lived for this will and He lived on it. Thus only can we explain to ourselves the sensitiveness of our Lord, where his right to prosecute this task was called into question, for then He felt Himself assailed in the center and sanctuary of his being. Hence on this very occasion, when after his entrance of the house of Zacchaeus the people murmured, saying, "He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner," our Lord did not content Himself with pointing out the propriety and beneficence of the act, but vindicated his conduct by an appeal to the supreme law of life under which He stood and from which He could not free Himself without ceasing to be what He was. With what sublime simplicity He takes for granted, that his entering into a house could be for no other purpose than to introduce salvation there! Of course, there is in this something unique, incapable of reproduction in precisely that sense by even the

most consecrated servant of God. He was made incarnate for the work of salvation, and we are dedicated to our ministry on the basis of a natural life we already possess. Paul perhaps in this respect approached nearest to the example of the Lord, having been separated from his mother's womb for the Apostleship. In his words, "Woe is me, if I preach not the Gospel" we imagine to hear an echo of our text and other similar declarations of our Lord. But surely, though with an almost equal distance between, we likewise ought to possess some reproduction of this mind of Christ within us. Pitiably indeed is the plight of the steward of Christ, who cannot say from a conviction as profound as the roots of his spiritual life itself, that he came into the kingdom for the very purpose of seeking and of saving that which was lost.

The Lord's statement, however, obtains a still richer and more forceful meaning by our enquiring whence and out of what state He came to enter upon this life-task. It may be in a certain sense true that in the Synoptical Gospels there is not that emphatic expression of his eternal pre-existence in the world of heaven, not that sublime consciousness of transcending the sphere of time, as are met with in the discourses recorded by John. But, surely, if we will only come to them with believing minds, we shall not fail to find even in these simpler narratives indications of the great mystery of godliness sufficiently clear to satisfy us, when in the helplessness of our sins we cry out for a divine, an eternal Savior. Such a message our text

brings us, when it declares that "the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost." The word "came" is in itself suggestive of a previous sphere and state which He exchanged for our world, a sphere and state wherein no seeking nor saving was required, because there all live secure and blessed in God. But much more suggestive is this word when coupled with the name "Son of Man." It is not accidental that our Lord makes use of this self-designation in a connection like this. Elsewhere also we read that "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom." And in a number of other passages the title is associated with his abode in the world of heaven, whence He descended to these lower regions of ours. In the prophecy of Daniel, where first the phrase "Son of Man" is used to describe the Messiah, twice a "coming" is affirmed of the Person so designated: "There came with the clouds of heaven One like unto a son of man, and He came even to the Ancient of Days." Now, while our Lord often identifies the "coming" thus described with his return to judgment, yet He likewise once and again retrospectively associates it with his first advent, when He came out of the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Being told, therefore, that it was the "Son of Man," who came to seek and to save, our first thought surely should be of that unspeakable grace of our Lord, who, being rich as God alone can be rich, yet for our sake became poor as sinful man only can be poor, that by his poverty we might be made rich. The depth to

which this seeking and saving brings Him down should be measured by the distance there is between the highest in God and the lowest in man. To lodge with publicans and sinners might be condescension for a high-placed personage—what language will express its meaning in the case of the infinite God? The “Son of Man,” who unites in Himself all that Deity and humanity together can lend of glory to the Messianic state, He it is who came to seek and to save the lost. It was such a glorious life that was wholly given up to its very last thought, poured out to the very last residue of its strength, and that for the task of helping us, the lowest of us, who would have turned away from one another, because the sinful felt it a degradation to stoop to such as were a degree more sinful than they acknowledged themselves to be. When we combine this consciousness of ineffable glory sacrificed with the consciousness of absolute surrender to the service of the most despised, then, and only then, do we begin to understand somewhat of the indignation with which Jesus repudiated the charge, brought by sinful men, that it was unworthy of Him to associate with publicans and sinners. With superhuman dignity the one word “Son of Man” silences that voice of murmuring in the streets of Jericho, and every echo, we may add, of that same voice from any quarter, or any age, when it presumes to criticize the Gospel of Christ on the ground that it speaks in accents of the sovereign grace of God.

But the fact that He came as the “Son of Man” is important for our Lord’s seeking and



saving of the lost in still another respect. By reason of it He retains even on earth the exercise of that divine knowledge and power which such a task calls into requisition. Love is far-sighted and wields great influence, but love alone, even divine love alone, would not be sufficient to find and save the sinner. Seeking and saving are acts in which God puts forth his omniscience and omnipotence, as the searcher of hearts and the Lord of spirits. To these divine prerogatives the "Son of Man" lays claim in the pursuit of his task. He brings to it all the qualifications which its character as a strictly divine work requires. When making to Nathanael the marvelous disclosure of his supernatural knowledge, He declares, "Ye shall see the heaven opened and the Angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." It is in the "Son of Man" that the mystic ladder, which Jacob saw at Bethel, has been truly set up, so that God visits man, and man is made aware of the saving presence of God. In healing the sick of the palsy He demonstrated the authority of the "Son of Man" to forgive sins on earth by bidding him arise, take up his bed and go to his house. Here the very point in question was, whether during his sojourn on earth such power belonged to the "Son of Man." That He possessed it in his heavenly state even the Scribes would scarcely have doubted; what they disputed was that any person on earth should pretend to share this right with God. But Jesus claims, and by the miracle proves his claim, that He is on earth invested with the power of saying



to a guilty soul, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," and to say it so that the conscience, which obeys no other voice than the voice of God Himself, will acknowledge Him as its Sovereign and be silent at his behest. But what need to look for illustrations elsewhere, when the connection of our text itself gives the most striking example of how our Lord places these divine attributes in the service of his seeking and saving love? When Jesus came to the spot where Zacchaeus had stationed himself for observation, it was surely not by accident that his eye discovered the publican amidst the branches of the tree. His looking up precisely at that point may convince us that He acted deliberately; it was a step in that process of seeking for which He had come. He calls the publican by name, though to all appearance the two had never met before. Yea before that spot on the roadside was reached, He had not only discovered his person, but had read with omniscience the innermost thoughts of his heart. He who could say, "Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," He had likewise seen Zacchaeus in advance of the latter's seeing Him. Here is a look from which no man can hide himself, the same that saw our first parents behind the branches of the fateful trees, and has since that hour, wherever sinners seek to conceal themselves, penetrated into the recesses of their guilt and shame, called them up from their depths of despair and brought them down from their heights of pride, a look from the eyes of the Lord which are in all places and see the small

no less than the great. More than this, we need not hesitate to affirm that the publican, though unaware of the fact, was there at his station by the appointment of Jesus. In all probability Zacchaeus in his desire to see Jesus, who He was, was not so exclusively actuated by curiosity as is usually assumed. But suppose it to have been curiosity and nothing more, even that was in no wise exempt from the Lord's control. Open to Him are a thousand ways to bring you and me to the very place and point where He desires to meet us. How many of us would have been saved, if the Lord had waited till we sought Him out? Thanks be to God, He is a Savior who seeks the lost, who with eyes supernaturally farsighted discerns us a long way off, and draws our interest to Himself by the sweet constraint of his grace, till we are face to face with Him and our soul is saved. As once, in the incarnation, He came down from heaven to seek mankind, so He still comes down silently from heaven in the case of each sinner, and pursues his search for that individual soul following it through all the mazes of its waywardness and the devious paths of its folly, sometimes unto the very brink of destruction, till at last his grace overtakes it and says, "I must lodge at thy house." For, besides the divine omniscience here manifested, we are made witnesses of the Lord's sovereign and almighty power. Having found Zacchaeus He addresses to him that call, which makes the lame to leap, the blind to see, the deaf to hear, nay the dead to arise, a call like the voice of God at the first creation, "Let there be light, and there was

light": "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thine house." Note the instantaneous effect. Behold here Zacchaeus, who perhaps never before had encountered the Savior, who would have hardly ventured to approach Jesus, behold him at a single word transformed into a disciple of the Lord. He knows the voice of the Shepherd immediately, makes haste to come down and receives him with joy. This is that wonderful effectual calling by name, which takes place wherever a sinner is saved, and which, while it may not always take place with such suddenness and under such striking circumstances as happened here, yet is in substance everywhere equally supernatural and immediate. The use of the divine word, not only does not detract from its immediacy, but serves the very purpose of expressing the fact that nothing but the omnipotent volition of God is at work in it. For it is characteristic of God, and of God alone, thus to produce effects by a mere word. He gives life to the dead and calls the things that are not, as though they were. Thus Lazarus was summoned from the grave, and thus Zacchaeus was brought into the Shepherd's fold. Of course, there is no cause for denying that as the result of, and simultaneously with, this call, many thoughts and convictions may be released and spring into action that were previously latent. Images may have floated before Zacchaeus' mind picturing Jesus in his ways and works. The Gospel summons may have come to him through rumor or report of the Savior's life, for even in regard to

these outward instrumentalities for conveying the knowledge of Christ it is sometimes true which is written elsewhere concerning the inward birth itself, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the voice thereof, but knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." The Spirit of God which makes all things new, can so baptize an ancient fragment of truth, a dimly remembered shadow of knowledge, as to give it in our apperception all the radiant newness of a flash of light fresh from the womb of revelation. But, while all these old elements of consciousness may work, as out of the past, they are in no case the actual producers of the new creature. On the contrary it is only through the immediate impartation of the higher life that they can be roused from their dormant state to the active vitality of a heartfelt experience. Whatever antecedently dwells in our souls of religious knowledge, of reasonable persuasion of the truth, of recognition of God's claim upon us, of stirrings of conscience—it all needs to be regenerated and quickened by the touch of Christ, before it can blossom into saving faith. We speak of our saving men, but this, while conveying a legitimate idea, is a metaphor. At bottom it signifies no more than that through the means of grace we arrange and prepare the situation in which it pleases God to perform the unique saving act. It is ours to let in the light and lay ready the garments which afterwards Lazarus will need, but we cannot wake the sleeper under the stone. Let us rejoice that this is so. Precisely that at the center there lies



something that we cannot do constitutes the glory of our message. If the gospel-dispensation were a matter of mere intellectual enlightenment and moral suasion, such as fall within the limits of human power to produce, then indeed it might be urged, that what is reserved for the divine action is subtracted from the scope of human opportunity, the intrusion of God, as it were, diminishing our glory. But on such a view of the gospel ministry its distinction is reduced to a level, where it matters little, whether the minister accomplishes more or less of it. If, on the other hand, the gospel service is incorporated in a creative movement of supernatural character, involving at its core what lies absolutely beyond human power, then to feel this inevitable limitation as a drawback would evince a strange blindness to the most glorious aspect of the preacher's office. To move on the outermost fringe of a process of that kind, to have even the slightest connection with it, confers an unspeakable distinction, because it associates one with what is specifically divine. How much greater still is the grace, if we are permitted not a minimum but the highest conceivable degree of proximity to the wonder-world of God! Is not the underlying cause of the failure to perceive this, that we too much individualize and isolate ourselves, instead of feeling strongly our organic appurtenance to the mighty, supernaturalizing movement introduced by God into this world? If we could only more adequately realize the irresistible omnipotence of its momentum and the robe of splendor it



casts around the smallest of its servants, we would exult with Paul and give thanks to God "who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ."

But let us return to Zacchaeus and note how our Lord further illustrates the nature of the saving act for which as "Son of Man" he claims to possess the full qualifications. It is an act of seeking and saving the "lost." What it implies can be ascertained from the state affirmed of its objects. There is a sure correlation between these two, and, if at any time we are apt to lose the proper perspective in regard to either of them, we should immediately rectify our view by reflecting upon the inherent significance of the other term. The "lost" are such as require a "Seeker" and "Savior"; when tempted to dilute or tone down the meaning of this word, it should suffice to remember, that in the same proportion as this is done we also detract from the Savior-title of our Lord a substantial part of its significance. And conversely, if we allow ourselves to lose sight of even the smallest part of what the words "to save" and "Savior" connote, it necessarily modifies the sound which the word "lost" carries to our ear. There is no escape from this; it is the inherent logic of the structure of the Gospel. To refuse to be bound by it puts one beyond the pale of consistent Christianity. It will therefore well repay us to scan most closely the exact correspondence of these two ideas in our text. There is perhaps no passage that enables us to do so to the same degree of definiteness and clearness as this saying of our Lord's. The reason is that here He has, in response to

the peculiar situation of Zacchaeus, taken pains to resolve the Savior-function in its two component parts, so as to give us a double light for the purpose. The "Son of Man" came not merely to seek, but "to seek and to save." Nor is this in the nature of a mere addition of a second thing to a first: these two likewise mutually illumine each other; the seeking determines the saving, and the saving in turn the seeking, and both as thus joined together receive their interwoven significance from the "being lost." Now it is not difficult to ascertain what the word "lost" expresses in the vocabulary of Jesus. "To be lost" in its simple, primary sense, which it scarcely needs knowledge of the original to understand, is "to be missing," to have passed out of the active possession and use of one's owner. The word, of course, in order to be intelligible, requires the supplementary thought of a definite possessor. It is not the vague general notion of forsakenness and misery Jesus has in mind when using it, but very particularly the fact of the sinner's being missing to God, that is missing to the normal relations man sustains to God. Because these relations to God constitute in our Lord's opinion the fundamental thing in human life, the state of "being lost" acquires that sad connotation of total derangement and dissolution of all the factors and forces of spiritual existence; the word has about it the solemn, ominous sound of darkness and chaos. The light and health of life, which are religion, have departed with the departure from Him who is the one source of both. The lost sinner is swung

out of the orbit appointed for him by the central position of God, deprived of all the attractions of fellowship and trust and obedience and blessedness that were his birthright ever since God in infinite grace constructed the circle of religion around Himself. Furthermore, being out of harmony with God, man, as a sinner, has lost the rhythm of his own spiritual life; he is full of discords and inner conflicts, law clashing with law and in consequence the deepest self falling a prey to these disruptive forces which attack it at its core. The very moment the prodigal leaves the Father's house he carries this fatal disorder within him, he is beside himself in principle, so that, when in bitter repentance he begins to realize his desperate condition, this is described as a "coming to himself." This, then, in the first place is "being lost," and to this in the first place addresses itself the task of the Son of Man. Hence its first part must of necessity be a "seeking" of the sinner. And the "seeking" must be such an act as will be able to undo the "being lost." We should, therefore, take a far too superficial view of it, were we to confine it to the bare effort at approach, or perhaps even to the search for locating the sinner, as the figure, taken by itself, might tempt us to do. No, the finding is not the mere discovery, it is the actual bringing back to God, something by which the sinner is restored to the blessed reality of what God is to him and he is to God: "And when he came to himself he said, I will arise and go to my Father." Are we not made to feel by this, that not first in the saving but al-

ready in the finding begins the uniqueness of the Savior's work, that which differentiates it from any finding that we can do, however glorious the latter may be in itself. For, after all, our finding of a man can be only preparatory to his becoming partaker of salvation. In the case of Christ it is identical with the saving act itself. Yea already the seeking is a part of the finding, because with unfailing certainty and directness the feet and the arms of the Savior move to the point where the saving embrace is accomplished. In the last analysis the difference between this and our part appears due to the difference between Christ as God and ourselves as mere human instrumentalities. To be found by Jesus is to be saved for the simple reason that in his Person God Himself restores the lost contact, gathers up the cords of life into His own bosom, and throws about us the circle of his divine beatitude, so that our soul, like a star in its native course, once more moves around Him, and knows no other law or center. So far as Christ was a preacher He preached with the voice of God, and in his message salvation was not merely potential but incarnate. He silently takes this for granted in his whole treatment of sinners, when He deals with them sovereignly in the supreme issues of life and death. In a word He saves as God saves. On this ground, and on this ground only, can we understand why so seldom in the matter of salvation He points beyond Himself to God, but constantly places his own Person in the center of the sinner's field of vision, so as to focus belief and trust and hope



and surrender and attachment in Himself. Consequently it is true not only in the abstractly logical, but in the most realistic, one might almost say in the local sense, that where Jesus is, there is salvation, and away from Him there is none. As He rebuked the disciples in the storm, because they forgot this fact, and feared that with Him on board they still might perish, even so He requires of us that in every tempest of life we shall be tranquil, because our ship carries Him. Was it not so in this very case of Zacchaeus? Because He had entered, salvation in Him and through Him had entered into the publican's house.

Salvation, however, according to our Lord's teaching is not exhausted by restoring the sinner to a sense of the realities of his appurtenance to God. There is another equally indispensable side to it. What this is we may learn by considering the second element that enters into the state of "being lost." "To be lost" is more than to be missing to God. It has also the passive, even more terrible sense of "being ruined," "given up to destruction." The former sense remains within the sphere of the negative; it describes what is absent from the sinner's state; this other sense is positive, denoting the presence of something dreadful there. If our Lord's discourse dwells chiefly, and with a noticeable predilection, on the first aspect of the matter, this is perhaps due to the vividness with which by very reason of the concrete, detailed picture of what is wanting, the glorious realities of religion are brought out. The rule



that we do not clearly visualize a thing until through its departure and its consequent failure to function it recalls its image to our mind, is here put to practical use. Strange to say, the face of religion appears in our Lord's teaching most clearly in the form of a description of its opposite. "In my father's house there is bread enough and to spare, while I perish with hunger"—what glowing words could have more powerfully expressed the blessedness of spiritual satisfaction near the heart of God than this pitiful cry of want! There is a lesson for us in this. We shall never succeed in impressing men, untouched by grace, with the riches and glory of religion, until we learn from Jesus to hold up to them the mirror of their sin and destitution. To say that there is no experience of redemption without the knowledge of sin sounds like a truism; perhaps it will appear less so, if we go one step farther and add, that there is, as things are, no proper, no deep knowledge either of religion or of redemption than through the sorrowful journey into the far country of famine and husks. But, while for this obvious reason the greater part of Jesus' teaching on the lost is concerned with the first aspect of their state, it would be wrong to infer that the other side only slightly or perfunctorily figured in his mind. The contrary is true. The subject possessed for Him such a fearful reality, that, except on the most solemn and imperative occasions, He hesitated to contemplate or draw it into the glare of open speech. It is none the less there with the ominous darkness of untold, nay unspeakable

things spread over it like a semi-opaque curtain. To be sure, it is something future, but this only deepens the gloom that covers it. It is born of the womb of the judgment. "Broad is the way that leads to perdition" and the lost are those walking on it. Only this should not be taken to mean that the loss contemplated is purely future. It overhangs and envelops the sinner even in this life. As the narrow path to the city of God, notwithstanding its straightness, is already bordered with some of the flowers and fruits of paradise, so the highway to the land of destruction, in spite of its seeming delights, has long stretches of shadow from the storm-cloud that is seen to thicken at the end. Even in this ultimate, more perilous, sense it is not sufficient to say that the sinner will suffer loss in the last day; according to the conception of Jesus he in principle is already lost. We feel something of the awful import conveyed, when in his high-priestly prayer the Savior declares: "Holy Father, I kept them in thy name which Thou hast given me; and I guarded them, and none of them was lost except the son of perdition." For, although Judas' sin in degree was altogether beyond comparison, it was not in substance different from each sin of every one of us. Except for the intervention of God no one has ever turned back on the broad way to perdition. Herein verily is seen the uttermost divine grace, that Christ seeks and saves from the plight of that despair. If our eyes delight to see Him as the friendly Shepherd on the trail of the lost sheep, let us not turn our looks away from Him

in this more solemn occupation of rescuing the lost from the judgment. Yea let us see Him in the darkness of the cross. For this part of the saving also takes place in no other way than the more gentle one we have already considered. Here too He not merely announces or promises the salvation, but carries it in his own Person. He is the impersonation of the God who pronounces the judgment and of the God who sovereignly takes it away, the one who bears our curse, and, while bearing it, speaks peace to our souls. For this cause He came to the cross, that He might be able to act for God in this solemn, anticipated judgment through which every sinner passes. When He speaks of sin and pardon and escape, the voice is the voice of God and the arms stretched underneath us are the everlasting arms of the Almighty Himself.

There is one other point on which we must briefly touch before closing. The text represents the object of the saving in the impersonal form as "that which was lost." The impersonal form of expression carries with it a generalizing effect. It amounts practically to "whatsoever is lost." The motive in our Lord's mind for this is not difficult to discover. A murmuring populace had excluded the class of publicans from the sphere that was worthy of his attention. To this Jesus replies with the emphatic declaration, that all that is lost falls under the legitimate scope of his task, that, since the very fact of salvation is evoked by there being lost ones, no exception can be allowed from its grace on the mere ground that the object appears lost. With-

in the realm of sin distinctions between class and class or degree and degree of sinners become obliterated. In comparison with the one tremendous fact of sin as such they dwindle into insignificance, or if there is any differentiation observable it assumes rather the opposite, paradoxical form of those taking the precedence, in whom, by reason of excessive sinfulness and most poignant sense of guilt, salvation's opportunity for magnifying itself is increased. The harlots and publicans enter first into the kingdom of God. But we should surely misinterpret this, if we took it to mean that Jesus, after precisely the same fashion seeks and saves each single one that is lost. Grace knows no jealousy except for the honor of God. With wide generousness, such as only a renewal of heart can give, it yearns and prays for the ingathering of many. None the less, when as saved sinners we place ourselves individually before God, who would not feel it as a denial of salvation itself to forget that pointedly and with a special mysterious determination the search, which in its issue placed him among the saved, was instituted and pursued for him on the part of God and Christ? Let us not from hyper-altruistic squeamishness allow ourselves to gloss this over, for, besides withholding from God the glory which is his due in it, we should lose for ourselves the most precious portion of God's saving grace. It is not as if Christ at random wandered through this world on the chance of finding some one upon whom to exercise his power of salvation. With



reference to each one of the children of God there was with Him from the beginning a unique compassion, a personalized love, and in result of this a singleness and determination of purpose, that imparted to his seeking of the least one of us the glory of a private inclusion in the intimate circle of God's saved ones. Of such seeking Jesus was conscious, and with all the wideness of his compassionate heart, which no world of sinners could overcrowd, He was not ashamed to acknowledge the gracious privileges and distinctions that pertained to the Lord's people or to any individual child of God. On this very occasion He gave expression to them in the words: "Inasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham," words which trace back the blessed issue of Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus to the covenantal promise made ages before to the patriarch, and ultimately to the sovereign election of which this promise was the outcome. It is with this as it is with the Pauline statement: no more than one can say, "Who loved me and gave Himself for me," is it possible to say, Who sought me and saved me, except by a profound faith in the elective purpose as the ultimate cause of the personal inheritance of salvation.

Now what in conclusion are the lessons that we, seekers of the salvation of others, ought to draw from this episode in our Lord's life? They are chiefly two, and I shall indicate them with the briefest of words. The first relates to the specialized character we as servants of Christ ought to make our work to bear. If his procedure is



normative for us—and who would deny this?—then all our seeking and saving, that is, all our religious endeavor, ought to carry the image and superscription of Christ's. And here the salient point is undoubtedly this, that the purpose, the goal of seeking and saving were for our Lord pronouncedly religious. Seeking and saving meant for Him, before aught else, seeking and saving for God. It had no humanitarian or world-improving purpose apart from this. It began with the thought of God and ended there. For that He came. And at that we should aim. This conception will not narrow our work any more than it did his, it will only centralize it. Beginning there we shall find that everything else will follow that ought to follow. Was it not so in the case of Zacchaeus? Once Jesus had entered his house with salvation, he could not help taking his stand as one morally and socially reconstructed before the crowd of detractors: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold." Provided the precious nard of religion be poured into it, no vessel is unworthy. But, on the other hand, the finest flagon of the world, when bearing a false trademark, and under the guise of religion offering some inferior substitute, has no proper place in the service of Christ. It belongs to the hidden things of shame which Paul had discarded. No servant of Christ should touch it. And even though other things be not positively deceitful or harmful in themselves, our duty of bringing salvation is so transcendently important and exacting that the Christian min-

ister cannot afford to lose time or energy over them.

The second lesson relates to what our specifically religious task of saving should centrally consist in. It may all be summed up in the simple formula, to bring Christ to men and men to Christ. It sounds simple, but is in reality a most difficult and most delicate task. No painter portraying face upon canvass ever used more exquisite art than is his who is preaching the gospel succeeds in so delineating the face of Christ as to make Him look out with his immortal Savior-eyes straight and deep into the hearts of sinners. Let your one concern be to bring the two together in the house where salvation is needed, and having led the Savior in, go thou out and shut the door silently behind thee. I tell you they shall not come out thence until salvation has done its perfect work.



## **IV. “Rabboni!”**

*The Gospel according to John,  
XX, 16: "Jesus saith unto her,  
Mary. She turneth herself and  
saith unto Him in Hebrew, Rab-  
boni; which is to say, Master."*



OUR text takes us to the tomb of the risen Lord, on the first Sabbath-morning of the New Covenant. It is impossible for us to imagine a spot more radiant with light and joy than was this immediately after the resurrection. Even when thinking ourselves back into the preceding moments, while as yet to the external eye there was nothing but the darkness of death, our anticipation of what we know to be about to happen floods the scene with a twilight of supernatural splendor. The sepulchre itself has become to us prophetic of victory; we seem to hear in the expectant air the wingbeat of the descending angels, come to roll away the stone and announce to us: "The Lord is risen indeed!" Besides this, we have learned to read the story of our Lord's life and death so as to consider the resurrection its only possible outcome, and this has to some extent dulled our sense for the startling character of what took place. We interpret the resurrection in terms of the atoning cross, and easily forget how little the disciples were as yet prepared for doing the same. And so it requires an effort on our part to understand sympathetically the state of mind they brought to the morning of this day. Nevertheless we must try to enter into their thoughts and feelings, if for no other reason, for this, that something of the same fresh marvel and gladness that subsequently came to them may fill our hearts also. Whether we may be able to

explain it or not, the Gospel tells us, that, notwithstanding the emphatic prediction by the Savior of his death and resurrection, they had but little remembrance of these words, and drew from them no practical support or comfort in the sorrow that overwhelmed them. In part this may have been due to the fact of our Lord's having only predicted and not fully explained these tremendous events. At any rate the circumstance shows that there is need of a deeper faith than that of mere acquaintance with and consent to external statements of truth, when the dread realities of life and death assail us. Dare we say that we ourselves should have proved stronger in such a trial, if over against all that mocked our hope we had been able to place no more than a dimly remembered promise? Let us thank God that, when we ourselves enter into the valley of the shadow of death, we have infinitely more than a promise to stay our hearts upon, that ours is the fulfilment of the promise, the fact of the resurrection, nay the risen Lord Himself present with rod and staff beside us.

Supplementing the account of John with the statements of the other Evangelists, we gain the following conception of the course of events previous to what the text relates. A small company of women went out at early dawn towards the garden, carrying the spices prepared as a last offering to honor Jesus. From among these Mary Magdalene in the eagerness of her desire to reach the place, ran forward, and discovered before the others that the stone had been rolled away. Without awaiting the arrival of her

companions she hastens back to tell Peter and John what she supposed to be true: "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb." Roused from the lethargy of their grief by this startling announcement the Apostles immediately went to the place, and by their own observation verified Mary's report. John came first, but merely looked into the tomb. Peter, who followed, entered in, and beheld the linen cloths lying and the napkin that was upon the Savior's head rolled up and put by itself. Then entered in John also and saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead. Their eyes were so holden that the true explanation never occurred to them. Perplexed, but not moved from a despairing state of mind, they returned to their abode.

Mary must have followed the Apostles at a distance when these came in haste to see for themselves. We find her standing without the tomb weeping. Is it not remarkable that, while both John and Peter departed, Mary remained? Although the same hopeless conclusion had forced itself upon her, yet it could not induce her to leave. In her mind it only intensified a thousand times the purpose with which she had come. How striking an illustration of the Savior's word that much forgiveness creates abounding love! But may we not believe that still something else reveals itself in this? Mary's attitude towards Jesus, more perhaps than any other disciple's seems to have been characterized by that simple dependence, which is but the consciousness of an ever present need. It was a

matter of faith, as much as of love, that made her differ at this time from the others. Unmixed with further motives, the recognition of Jesus as the only refuge from sin and death filled her heart. In a measure, of course, He had been this to the others also. But whilst to them He stood for many other things in addition, the circumstances under which she had become attached to Him made Mary's soul the mirror of saving faith pure and simple. And because she was animated by this fundamental spiritual impulse, drawing her to the Savior more irresistibly than affection or sorrow could have done, therefore she could not but continue seeking Him, even though unable for the moment to do aught else than weep near his empty tomb. In vain does Calvary proclaim that the Lord is dead, in vain does the tomb declare that He has been buried, in vain does the absent stone suggest that they have taken Him away—this threefold witness will not convince Mary that He has gone out of her life forever. And why? Because in the depth of her being there was an even more emphatic witness which would not be silenced but continued to protest that she must receive Him back, since He is her Savior. Contact, communion with Christ had become to her the vital breath of her spiritual life; to admit that the conditions rendering this possible had ceased to exist would have meant for her to deny salvation itself. There is, it is true, a pathetic incongruousness between the absoluteness of this desire and the futile form in which for the moment she thought it could be satisfied. In the last

analysis what was she doing but seeking a lifeless body, in order that by caring for it and feeling near it she might still the longing of a living faith? Suppose she had received what she sought, would not in the next moment the other deeper desire have reasserted itself for that in Him which it was absolutely beyond the power of a dead Jesus to give her? Still, however incongruous the form of expression, it was an instinct to which an outward reality could not fail to correspond. It arose out of a primary need, for which provision must exist somewhere, if redemption exists at all. Though unaware of the resurrection as a fact, she had laid hold upon the supreme principle from which its necessity flows. Once given the intimate bond of faith between a sinner and his Savior, there can be no death to such a relationship. Mary, in her simple dependence on Jesus, had risen to the point where she sought in Him life and sought it ever more abundantly. To her faith He was Conqueror over death long before He issued from the grave. She was in rapport with that spiritual aspect, that quickening quality of his Person, of which the resurrection is the sure consequence. Here at bottom lies the decisive issue for everyone as regards the attitude to be assumed towards this great fact. Ultimately, stripped of all accidentals, the question resolves itself into this: What means Christ for us? For what do we need Him? If we have learned to know ourselves guilty sinners, destitute of all hope and life in ourselves, and if we have experienced that from Him came to us pardon, peace and



strength, will it not sound like mockery in our ears, if somebody tells us, that it does not matter, whether Jesus rose from the dead on the third day? It is of the very essence of saving faith that it clamors for facts, facts to show that the heavens have opened, that the tide of sinful nature has been reversed, the guilt of sin expiated, the reign of death destroyed and life and immortality brought to light. And because this is the insuppressible cry of faith, what else should faith do, when it sees doubt and unbelief emptying the Gospel of the living Christ, what else should it do but stand outside weeping and repeating the plaint: They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him?

But, although these things were in principle present in Mary's heart, she did not at that moment perceive the pledge of hope contained in them. Her grief was too profound to leave room for introspection. It even hid from her vision the objective evidence of the resurrection that lay around her. Worse than this, she turned what was intended to help her into an additional reason for unbelief. But who of us shall blame her? Have not we ourselves under as favorable circumstances made the mistake of nourishing our unbelief on what was meant to be food for our faith? Do we not all remember occasions when we stood outside the grave of our hopes weeping, and did not perceive the hand stretched out to prepare us by the very thing we interpreted as sorrow for a higher joy? From Mary's experience let us learn to do better. What the

Lord expects from us at such seasons is not to abandon ourselves to unreasoning sorrow, but trustingly to look sorrow in the face, to scan its features, to search for the help and hope, which, as surely as God is our Father, must be there. In such trials there can be no comfort for us so long as we stand outside weeping. If only we will take the courage to fix our gaze deliberately upon the stern countenance of grief, and enter unafraid into the darkest recesses of our trouble, we shall find the terror gone, because the Lord has been there before us, and, coming out again, has left the place transfigured, making out of it by the grace of his resurrection a house of life, the very gate of heaven.

This was just what happened to Mary. Not forever could she stand weeping, forgetful of what went on around her. "As she wept she looked into the tomb, and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." It was a step in the right direction that she roused herself from her inaction. Still, what strikes us as most characteristic in this statement is its implying that even the vision of angels did not sufficiently impress her to raise the question, to what the appearance of these celestial messengers might be due. Probably this was the first time she had come in direct contact with the supernatural in that particular form. The place was doubtless charged with the atmosphere of mystery and wonder angels bring with themselves when entering into our world of sense. And yet no tremor seems to have run

through her, no feeling of awe to have made her draw back. A greater blindness to fact is here than that which made her miss the sign of the empty grave. What more convincing evidence of the truth of the resurrection could have been offered than the presence of these two angels, silently, reverently, majestically sitting where the body of Jesus had lain? Placed like the Cherubim on the mercy-seat, they covered between themselves the spot where the Lord had reposed, and flooded it with celestial glory. It needed no voice of theirs to proclaim that here death had been swallowed up in victory. Ever since the angels descended into this tomb the symbolism of burial has been radically changed. From this moment onward every last resting-place where the bodies of believers are laid is a furrow in that great harvest field of Christ whence heaven draws upward into light each seed sunk into it, whence Christ himself was raised, the first fruits of them that sleep.

Let us not overlook, however, that Mary's disregard of the angels revealed in a most striking form something good also, to-wit: her intense preoccupation with the one thought of finding the Lord. For Him she had been looking into the tomb. He not being there, it was empty to her view, though filled with angelic glory. She would have turned aside without speaking, had not the angels of their own accord spoken to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" These words were meant as an expression of sympathy quite natural in beings wont to rejoice over repenting sinners. But in this question there is at

the same time a note of wonder at the fact that she should be weeping at all. To the mind of the angels the resurrection was so real, so self-evident, that they could scarcely understand how to her it could be otherwise. They felt, as it were, the discord between the songs of joy with which their own world was jubilant, and this sound of weeping coming out of a world of darkness and despair. "Woman, why weepest thou?" Tears would be called for indeed, hadst thou found Him in the tomb, but not at a time like this, when heaven and earth unite in announcing: He is risen in glory, the King of life!

Mary's answer to the angels shows that neither their sympathy nor their wonder had succeeded in piercing her sorrow. "She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." These are almost the identical words in which she had informed Peter and John of her discovery of the empty tomb. Still a slight change appears. To the Apostles she had said "the Lord" and "we know not." To the angels it is: "my Lord" and "I know not." In this is revealed once more her intense sense of proprietorship in Jesus. In that sense the angels could not have appropriated Him for themselves. They might hail Him as their matchless King, but to Mary He was even more than this, her Lord, her Savior, the One who had sought and saved and owned her in her sins.

Having given this answer to the angels she turned herself backward and beheld Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. No expla-



nation is added of the cause of this movement. It matters little. Our interest at this stage of the narrative belongs not to what Mary but to what Jesus did. On his part the encounter was surely not accidental but intended. He had witnessed her coming once and again, her weeping, her bending over the tomb, her answer to the angels, and had witnessed not only these outward acts, but also the inward conflict by which her soul was torn. And He appears precisely at the point where his presence is required, because all other voices for conveying to her the gladsome tidings have failed. He had been holding Himself in readiness to become in his own Person the preacher of the Gospel of life and hope to Mary. There is great comfort for us in this thought that, however dim our conscious faith and the sense of our salvation, on the Lord's side the fountain of grace is never closed, its connection with our souls never interrupted; provided there be the irrepressible demand for his presence, He cannot, He will not deny Himself to us. The first person to whom He showed Himself alive after the resurrection was a weeping woman, who had no greater claim upon Him than any simple penitent sinner has. No eye except that of the angels had as yet rested upon His form. The time was as solemn and majestic as that of the first creation when light burst out of chaos and darkness. Heaven and earth were concerned in this event; it was the turning-point of the ages. Nor was this merely objectively so: Jesus felt Himself the central figure in this new-born universe, He tasted the exquisite joy of one



who had just entered upon an endless life in the possession of new powers and faculties such as human nature had never known before. Would it have been unnatural, had He sought some quiet place to spend the opening hour of this new unexplored state in communion with the Father? Can there be any room in his mind for the humble ministry of consolation required by Mary? He answers these questions Himself. Among all the voices that hailed his triumph no voice appealed to Him like this voice of weeping in the garden. The first appearance of the risen Lord was given to Mary for no other reason than that she needed Him first and needed Him most. And what more appropriate beginning could have been set for his ministry of glory than this very act? Nothing could better convince us, that in his exalted state He retains for us the same tender sympathy, the same individual affection as He showed during the days of his flesh. It is well for us to know this, because otherwise the dread impression of his majesty might tend to hinder our approach to Him. Who of us has not at some time of communion with the Savior felt the overwhelming awe that seized the seer on Patmos, so that we could not utter our prayer, until He laid his hand upon us and said: Fear not. We should be thankful, then, for the grace of Christ which has so arranged it, that between his rising from the dead and his departure for heaven a season of forty days was interposed, a transition period, helping, as it were, the feebleness of our faith in the act of apprehending his glory. Perhaps the Lord for

the same reason also intentionally placed his meeting with Mary at the threshold of his resurrection-life. Like other acts recorded in the Fourth Gospel this act rises above the momentary situation and acquires a symbolic significance, enlarging before our eyes until it reveals Him in his priestly ministration conducted from the throne of glory.

However not the fact only of his showing Himself to Mary, but likewise the manner of it claims our attention. When first beholding Him she did not know the Lord, and even after his speech she still supposed Him to be the gardener. The chief cause for this may have lain in the change which had taken place in Him when the mortal put on immortality. Now behold with what exquisite tact the Lord helps her to restore the broken bond between the image her memory retained of Him and that new image in which henceforth He would walk through her life and hold converse with her spirit. Even these first words: "Women why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" though in form scarcely differing from the question of the angels, go far beyond the latter in their power to reach Mary's heart. In the word "woman" with which He addresses her speaks all the majesty of one who felt Himself the Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead. It is a prelude to the still more majestic, "Touch me not" spoken soon afterwards. And yet in the words, "Why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" He extends to her that heart-searching sympathy, which at a single glance can read and understand the whole secret

of her sorrow. He knew that such weeping results only there where one who is more than father or mother has been taken away. And how instantaneous the effect these words produced! Though she still supposes him the gardener, she takes for granted that he at least could not have taken the body with evil intent, that he will not refuse to restore it: "Sir, if thou hast born Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." A certain response to his sympathy is also shown in this, that three times she refers to Jesus as "Him," deeming it unnecessary to mention his name. Thus in the way she met the gardener there was already the beginning resumption of the bond of confidence between her and the Lord. And thus Jesus found the way prepared for making Himself known to her in a most intimate manner. "Jesus saith unto her 'Mary.' She turneth and saith unto Him, 'Rabboni'." It happened all in a moment, and by a simple word, and yet in this one moment Mary's world was changed for her. She had in that instant made the transition from hopelessness because Jesus was absent, to fullness of joy because Christ was there. We may well despair of conveying by any process of exposition the meaning of these two words. This is speech the force of which can only be felt. And it will be felt by us in proportion as we clearly remember some occasion when the Lord spake a similar word to us and drew from us a similar cry of recognition. Doubtless much of the magical effect of Jesus' word was due to the tone in which He spoke it. It was a tone calling

to her remembrance the former days of closest fellowship. This was the voice that He alone could use, the same voice that had once commanded the demons to depart from her, and to which ever since she had been wont to listen for guidance and comfort. By using it He meant to assure her, that, whatever transformation had taken place, there could be and would be no change in the intimate, personal character of their relationship. And Mary was quick to apprehend this. The Evangelist takes pains to preserve for us the word she uttered in its original Aramaic form, because he would have us understand that it meant more at this moment than could be conveyed by the ordinary rendering of "Teacher" or "Master." "Rabboni" has a special untranslatable significance. It was the personal response to the personal "Mary," to all intents a proper name no less than the other. By speaking it Mary consciously re-entered upon the possession of all that as Rabboni He had meant to her. Only one thing she had yet to learn, for teaching her which the Lord did not deem even this unique moment too joyful or sacred. In the sudden revulsion from her grief Mary would have given some external expression to the tumult within by grasping and holding Him. But He restrained her, saying: "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended unto the Father; but go unto my brethren and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." At first sight these words may seem a contrast to those immediately preceding. And yet no mistake could be greater



than to suppose that the Lord's sole or chief purpose was to remind her of the restrictions which henceforth were to govern the intercourse between Himself and her. His intention was much rather to show that the desire for a real communion of life would soon be met in a new and far higher way than was possible under the conditions of local earthly nearness. "Touch me not" does not mean: Touch is too close a contact to be henceforth permissible; it means: the provision for the highest, the ideal kind of touch has not been completed yet: "I am not yet ascended to my Father." His words are a denial of the privilege she craved only as to the form and moment in which she craved it; in their larger sense they are a pledge, a giving, not a withholding of Himself from her. The great event of which the resurrection is the first step has not yet fulfilled itself; it requires for its completion the ascent to the Father. But when once this is accomplished then all restrictions will fall away, and the desire to touch that made Mary stretch forth her hand shall be gratified to its full capacity. The thought is not different from that expressed in the earlier saying to the disciples: "Ye shall see me because I go to the Father." There is a seeing, a hearing, a touching, first made possible by Jesus' entrance into heaven and by the gift of the Spirit dependent on that entrance. And what He said to Mary He commissioned her to repeat to his brethren, that they also might be taught to view the event in its proper perspective. May we not fitly close our study of the text with reminding ourselves,



that we too are included among the brethren to whom He desired these tidings to be brought? Before this He had never called the disciples by this name, as He had never until now so suggestively identified Himself with them by speaking of "your Father and my Father" and "your God and my God." We are once more assured that the new life of glory, instead of taking Him from us, has made us in a profounder sense his brethren and his Father our Father. Though, unlike Mary and the disciples, we have not been privileged to behold Him in the body, yet together with the believers of all ages we have an equal share in what is far sweeter and more precious, the touch through faith of his heavenly Person for which the appearances after the resurrection were but a preparation. Let us then not linger at the tomb, but turn our faces and stretch our hands upwards into heaven, where our life is hid with Him in God, and whence He shall also come again to show Himself to us as He did to Mary, to make us speak the last great "Rabboni," which will spring to the lips of all the redeemed, when they meet their Savior in the early dawn of that eternal Sabbath that awaits the people of God.

## **V. The More Excellent Ministry**

*The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, III, 18: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord, the Spirit."*

THIS second letter of Paul to the Church at Corinth is marked by a pronounced polemic strain. In this respect it somewhat resembles the Epistle to the Galatians. In each instance a serious crisis in the life of the church had evoked it. It is further common to both writings that in certain passages the polemic assumes a sharply personal character. In neither case is this due to any temperamental difficulty on Paul's part to control his outraged feelings, although even if this had been so, much could have been said in excuse of the Apostle. His opponents had certainly not been sparing in personalities. He had been represented as a deceiver, as one who preached himself and praised himself. It had been charged that in his quasi-Apostolic authority he lorded it over the church, employed his usurped power for casting down instead of for building up, and that, in spite of all this bluff and bluster of prestige, he lacked the ability to make good his pretensions, being indeed weighty and strong in his letters, but weak in his bodily presence, and in his speech, of no account. The insinuation had been made that Paul himself was aware of the hollowness of his claims, because he would not take from the church the support to which, if a true Apostle, he ought to have felt himself entitled. He had been held up as a man who by his fickleness, his yea yea, nay nay, betrayed the duplicity of his position. The Apostle had not

even been spared that meanest of all aspersions—that he was spending money collected for the poor saints in Judea on his own person. His sincerity as a minister of the truth had been called into question. It was charged that, while aware of his subordination to the original Apostles, he was disloyal to them, and substituted for their gospel an entirely different one spun out of his own mind. Thus the truth of the very substance of his preaching was challenged. In this respect again a certain resemblance to the tactics of his Galatian opponents may be observed. The charge in both instances was that he preached “a different gospel.” Nevertheless the point of attack had been somewhat shifted. In Galatia the main question had been that of salvation with or without the law. Here in Corinth, on the other hand, the controversy raged around Paul’s teaching concerning the Christ. It was with another Jesus that his opponents had approached the Corinthians. No effort had been spared to prove this the true Jesus, by the side of whom the Christ of Paul’s preaching was a pure figment of the imagination. Suspicion had been cast on the source of his knowledge of the Savior on the ground that the visions through which it was obtained belonged to the class of wild, fantastic experiences, and that these marked Paul as one beside himself, not merely in this one point, but in the entire tone and temper of his religious life. The exalted, spiritual, heavenly nature, in which his gospel clothed the glorified Christ, was construed as convincing proof of the darkness and incomprehensibleness of the Apostle’s message.



He preached a Gospel that was veiled. And over against these elusive and intangible things had been placed the palpable institutions of the Mosaic Covenant, carrying with them the demand for a Messiah correspondingly substantial and realistic in his make-up. This is but an early illustration of the principle which from that time onward has shaped all forms of teaching in the Church. For in each instance the view about the method of salvation is reflected in the conception of the Savior. A certain Gospel requires a certain kind of Christ, and a certain type of Christ a certain Gospel.

It might have seemed as if the attack upon the Apostle had therewith reached its logical conclusion and could not possibly go farther. Still this was not the case. With a curious retroversive movement the issue had been carried back from this point to the question of the personality of Paul, with this difference only—it was now his dignity in office that had been assailed. Paul's office as such was made out to be mean and contemptible. Such a Christ and such a cause could engage one who labored for them only in the weakest and most ignoble kind of service. Paul was not permitted to escape the immemorial stigma reflected upon the minister from the apparent foolishness and weakness of the cross. And the Apostle was sensitive, if anywhere, on this point of the nobility and glory of his office. Moral aspersions against his character he might, had it not been for fear of danger to the churches, have passed by as un-

worthy of notice. But the pride of office was stronger in him than the sense of personal honor. And thus it happens that we are indebted to these disturbers of the Corinthian church, whose names have long been forgotten, for an encomium upon the Gospel service, which for power and splendor has no equal in the records of Christian apology. It deserves to be placed beside the song of triumph in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. As there the Apostle is carried on the crest-wave of assurance of salvation, so here he moves with the full tide of enthusiasm over the excellence of his calling. The very words are, as it were, baptized in the glory of which they speak.

Let us briefly examine the several elements that enter into this high consciousness. The form of argument which Paul adopts is evidently determined by the method of his detractors. At the climax of their calumny they had concentrated their attack on the meanness and weakness of his message. Consequently he chooses to defend himself on the same basis by arguing from the glory of the message to the distinction of the bearer. While thus adjusted to the manner of attack, this method was also in keeping with Paul's innate modesty, still further refined by grace. But there was another tactical motive besides. Paul recognized that by thus approaching the subject a more substantial title to official prestige could be made out than in any other way, such, perhaps, as calling attention to outward results. After all it is not so much by what the minister contributes of

himself to the cause of Christ, but rather by what he is enabled to draw out and utilize from the divine resources, that his office and work will be tested. It is not chiefly the question whether we are strong in the cause, but whether the cause is strong in and through us. And herein lies the practical value of the argument in its application to the servants of Christ under all conditions. If Paul had staked the issue on the personal factor, then there could be in his testimony but little comfort and encouragement for others, for there are not many Pauls. Now that the subject is dealt with in the other way the Apostle's words contain something enheartening for you and me and the simplest, obscurest bearer of the Gospel. We are too often told at the present day that the official, professional distinction of the minister is a matter of the past, that it has become purely a question of what is called personal magnetism whether he shall earn success or failure. Paul certainly was far from this opinion. To be sure, to such things as ecclesiastical position or rank he would hardly have attributed much importance. Even the difference between the Apostolate and other forms of service in the Church seems scarcely to enter into the reckoning here. But within the realm of the invisible and spiritual there remains such a thing as an intrinsic prestige. Paul is conscious of belonging to a veritable elite of the Spirit. I beg you to notice on how large a scale this thought is projected. It gives rise to the conception of a ministry of God's covenant, that is, a ministry identified with

an all-comprehensive dispensation of divine grace. Thus Moses was a minister of the Old and Paul is a minister of the New Covenant. To have such a Covenant-ministry means to be identified with God in the most intimate manner, for the Covenant expresses the very heart of God's purpose. It means to be initiated into the holiest mysteries of redemption, for in the Covenant these are transacted. It means to be enrolled on the list of the great historic servants of God, for in the organism of the Covenant these are united and salute each other across the ages. It means to become a channel through which supernatural currents flow. In the Covenant the servant is, as it were, made part of the wonder-world of salvation itself. The Apostle has embodied this grandiose thought in a most striking figure. "Thanks be to God," he exclaims, "who always leadeth us in triumph in Christ." The onward march of the Gospel is a triumphal procession, God the victorious Conqueror, Paul a follower in God's train, burning the incense to his glory, making manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place!

What has been said so far applies to the ministry of the Covenant of Grace under both dispensations. It describes a glory common to Moses and Paul. The Apostle ungrudgingly recognizes that the Old Testament had its peculiar distinction. To be a prophet or priest of the God of Israel conferred greater honor than any secular prominence in the pagan history of the race. Even the ministration written and engraven on stones came with glory. This



excellence of the Old Covenant found a symbolic expression in the light upon the face of Moses after his tarrying with God upon the mount, a light so intense that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon its radiance. Paul's purpose, however, is not to emphasize what the two dispensations have in common, but that in which the New surpasses the Old. Since the opponents had clothed their attack upon him in the invidious form of a comparison with the Mosaic administration, it was natural for him to take up the challenge and fight out the battle along the same line. None the less the comparison, as followed up by Paul, is startling in its exceeding boldness. A more impressive disclosure of his exalted sense of office is scarcely conceivable. In order to feel the full force of this we ought to make clear to ourselves that not two single persons but two pairs of persons are set over against each other. On the one side stand God and Moses, the reflector of his glory, on the other Christ and Paul, the reflector of his glory. It would be interesting, but beside our present purpose, to consider what it implies as to the nature and rank of Christ, that the Apostle feels free simply to put Him on a line with God as a fount and dispenser of glory in the New Covenant after no different fashion than God was under the Old Covenant. Without pursuing this further, we now wish to make the point, that the comparison lies not between Moses and Christ, but between Moses and Paul. Than Moses no greater name was known in the annals of Old Testament redemption. Prophet, priest, law-



giver in one, he towers high above all the others. And to Paul, the son of Israel, all this wealth of sacred story gathered round the head of Moses must have been a thousand times more impressive than it can be to us. What an overwhelming sense then of the greatness of his own ministry must Paul have possessed, when he dared conceive the thought of being greater than Moses! "Verily that which has been made glorious has been made not-glorious in this respect by reason of the glory that surpasseth."

The Apostle, however, does not give expression to this lofty consciousness in an outburst of unreasoning enthusiasm. He carefully specifies wherein the surpassing excellence of his ministry above that of Moses consists. The first point relates to the contrast between transitoriness and eternity. Putting it in terms of the figure, Paul affirms that the glory of the Old Covenant had to pass away, whereas that of the New Covenant must remain. When Moses descended from the mount his face shone with a refulgence of the divine glory near which he had been permitted to dwell for a season. But his face could not retain this brightness for any length of time. It soon disappeared. Thus what Moses stood for was glorious but lacked permanence. The day was bound to come when its splendor would vanish. On the other hand the New Covenant is final and abiding. The times cannot outgrow, the developments of history cannot antique it, it carries within itself the pledge of eternity. But not only did such a difference actually exist—both Moses and

Paul were aware of the state of things in each case. Moses was aware of it, for we are told that he put the veil on his face for the purpose of hiding the disappearance of the glory. And Paul was, since in pointed contrast to this procedure, he professes to minister with open face: "Not as Moses, who put a veil over his face." It was further inevitable that in Paul's estimation the speedy abrogation of Moses' work detracted from his glory as a servant of the Covenant, and that, on the other hand, the enduring character of his own work added greatly to the honor wherewith Paul felt it clothed him and the satisfaction he derived from it. Time, especially time with the wasting power it acquires through sin, is the arch-enemy of all human achievement. It kills the root of joy which otherwise belongs to working and building. All things which the succeeding generations of mankind have wrought in the course of the ages succumb to its attacks. The tragic sense of this accompanies the race at every step in its march through history. It is like a pall cast over the face of the peoples. In revealed religion through the grace of redemption it is in principle removed, yet not so that under the Old Covenant the dark shadow entirely disappears. The plaint of it is in Moses' own Psalm: "Thou turnest man to destruction—Thou carriest them away as with a flood." And something of this bitter taste of transitoriness enters even into the Old Testament consciousness of salvation. Now put over against this the triumphant song of life and assurance of immortality that fills the glorious, spacious

days of the New Covenant, especially where first it issues from the womb of the morning bathed in the dew of imperishable youth. The note of futility and depression has disappeared, and in place of this the rapture of victory over death and decay, the exultant feeling of immersion in the atmosphere of eternity prevail. And this particularly communicated itself to the spirit in which the Covenant-ministration was performed. The joy of working in the dawn of the world to come quickens the pulse of all New Testament servants of Christ. Paul felt that the product of his labors, the output of his life, would shine with unfading splendor in the palace of God. Thus also the honor of being a fellow laborer of God first obtains its full rich meaning. It is the prerogative of God, the Eternal One, to work for eternity. As the King of the ages He discounts and surmounts all the intervening forces and barriers of time. He who is made to share in this receives the highest form which the divine image can assume in its reproduction in man. Neither things present nor things to come can conquer him. He reigns in life with God through Jesus Christ, his Lord.

In the second place, there is a difference operating to the advantage of Paul between the two ministries in regard to the measure of openness and clearness with which they are conducted. Moses ministered with covered, Paul ministers with open, that is uncovered, face. As regards Moses this was that the children of Israel should not perceive the passing away of the glory underneath the veil. Not

that Moses acted as a deceiver of his people. Paul means to say, that in receiving the glory, and losing it, and hiding its loss, he served the symbolic function of illustrating, in the first place, the glory of the Old Covenant, in the second place its transitoriness, and in the third place the ignorance of Israel in regard to what was taking place. The chief point of ignorance of the people related to the eclipse and abrogation their institutions would suffer. But the symbolism permits of being generalized, so as to include all the limitations of self-knowledge and self-understanding under which the Old Covenant labored. As a matter of fact Paul immediately afterwards extends it to Israel's entire reading of the law, that is, to Israel's self-interpretation and Scripture-interpretation on a large scale. Ignorance as to the end would easily produce ignorance or imperfect understanding with reference to the whole order of things under which the people were living. Everything temporal and provisional, especially if it does not know itself as such, is apt to wear a veil. It often lacks the faculty of discriminating between what is higher and lower in its composition. Things that are ends and things that are mere means to an end are not always clearly separated. Every preparatory stage in the history of redemption can fully understand itself only in the light of that which fulfills it. The veil of the Old Covenant is lifted only in Christ. The Christian standpoint alone furnishes the necessary perspective for apprehending its place and function in the organism of



the whole. So it came about that the Mosaic Covenant moved through the ages a mystery to itself and to its servants. According to Paul this tragical process reached its climax when Israel came face to face with Him who alone could interpret Israel to itself. It is not for us to unravel the web of self-misinterpretation and unbelief wrought by the Jews on the ancient loom previously to the appearance of Christ. Paul implies that both causes contributed to the sad result. There was an element of original guilt as well as of subsequent hardening involved. Their minds were blinded. The veil was on the reading of Moses, but the veil was also on their hearts. And the Apostle's word still holds true: the veil remains until the present day. It can be taken away only when Israel shall turn to the Lord. Then, and not until then, that ghost of the Old Covenant which now accompanies Israel on its wandering through the ages, will vanish from its side. As a double gift of grace it will then receive the treasures of Moses and those of Paul from the hand of Christ.

It is in sharp contrast to all this that Paul describes his own mode of ministering under the New Covenant. He serves with unveiled face, and in this one figure all the openness, the self-intelligence, the transparency of his ministry find expression. The proclamation of the Word of the Gospel has left behind all the old reserve and restrictions and limitations under which Moses and his successors labored. Its ministers can now speak fully and freely and plainly



the whole counsel of God. Paul glories in being able to do this. He uses great boldness of speech. There is nothing to withhold, nothing to conceal: the entire plan of redemption has been unfolded, the mystery hidden through the ages has been revealed, and there is committed to every ambassador of Christ an absolute message, no longer subject to change. Not the delicate procedure of the diplomat, who hides his aim, but the stately stepping forward of the herald who renders an authoritative pronouncement, characterizes his task to Paul's own mind. He discards all human artifice and invention, all unsincere and undignified devices evidently employed by some at that time, as they are still not infrequently at the present time, to render the Gospel palatable to his hearers. He scorns, where principles are concerned, all compromise and concession: "Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, even as we obtained mercy, we faint not, but we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." There is a straightforwardness, a simplicity in preaching, which is proportionate to the preacher's own faith in the absoluteness, and inherent truthfulness of his message. No shallow optimism about the adjustableness of Christianity to ever changing conditions, about its self-rejuvenating power after apparent decline, can possibly make up for a lack of this fundamental conviction. Unless we are convinced with Paul

that Christianity has a definable and well-defined message to bring, and are able to tell wherein it consists, all our talk about its vitality or adaptability will neither comfort ourselves nor deceive others. A thing is not immortal because it is long-lived and dies hard. Only when through all changes of time it preserves unaltered its essence and source of power, can it be considered worth while as a medicine for the sickness of the world. Something that needs the constant use of cosmetics to keep up the appearance of youth is a caricature of the Christianity of the New Testament. Its case is worse than it imagines: it has not merely passed its youth, but is in danger of losing its very life.

In the next place, the greater distinction of the ministry of the New Covenant springs from this that it is in the closest conceivable manner bound up with the Person and work of the Savior. It is a Christ-dispensation in the fullest sense of the word. What is possessed by the New Covenant is not the glory of God as such, but the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Moses had a great vision on the mountain, but Paul had a greater one, even as Moses himself had a greater, when he stood with Elias on the New Testament mount of transfiguration. Paul beholds the glory of Christ as in a mirror, or, according to another rendering, reflects it as a mirror. His entire task, both on its communicative and on its receptive side, can be summed up in his reflecting back the Christ-glory, caught by himself unto others. To behold Christ and to make others behold Him is the substance of

his ministry. All the distinctive elements of Paul's preaching relate to Christ, and bear upon their face his image and superscription. God is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. In the procuring of righteousness Christ is the one efficient cause. In Christ believers were chosen, called, justified, and will be glorified. To be converted is to die with Christ and to rise with Him. The entire Christian life, root and stem and branch and blossom, is one continuous fellowship with Christ. But to say that the Gospel is full of Christ is still too general a statement. What the Apostle affirms is that it is particularly the Gospel of the glory of Christ, and that, therefore, its ministry also has specifically to do with this. Now this is not a mere metaphorical way of speaking, as if it meant no more than that in every possible manner the Gospel-preaching brings out and promotes the honor of the Savior. Paul intends it in a far more literal sense. The glory of Christ transmitted by his Gospel is an objective reality. It is that which effects the Savior's exalted state since the resurrection. While including the radiance of his external appearance, it is by no means confined to this. Paul reckons among this glory the whole equipment of grace and power and beauty, all the supernatural potencies and forces stored up in the risen Lord. It consists of energy no less than of splendor. Taken in this comprehensive, realistic sense, it is equivalent to the content of the Gospel, and determines the nature of its ministry. The rendering, "beholding as in a

mirror" admirably fits into this representation. As a mirror is not an end in itself, but exists for the sake of what is seen through it, so the Gospel serves no other purpose than to bring men face to face with the glory of Christ. It is naught else but a tale of Christ, a Christ in words, the exact counterpart of Christ's Person and work in their glorious state. Because of the consciousness of this Paul felt himself greater than Moses, for the partial light that shone on the latter's face has now become omnipresent and fills the New Covenant. Under the Old Dispensation the servants of God saw only from afar the brightness of the Messiah's rising. Now He is visible from nearby, the One filling all in all, occupying the entire field of vision. The humblest of preachers surpasses in this respect the greatest of Old Testament evangelists. He carries a Gospel all-fragrant and all-radiant with Christ.

In the fourth place the excellence of the ministry of the New Covenant is seen in this—that it is a ministry of abundant forgiveness and righteousness. This aspect of it also is intimately connected with the glory of the Lord, although it requires a somewhat closer inspection to perceive this. It should be remembered that the glory possessed by Christ in heaven is, to Paul, the emphatic, never-silent declaration of his absolute righteousness acquired during the state of humiliation. It sprang from his obedience and suffering and self-sacrifice in our stead. It is righteousness translated into the language of effect, the crown set upon his work



of satisfaction. Consequently the servant of the New Covenant can attach his ministry of pardon and peace to the glory of Christ. Hence Paul in working out the comparison between Moses and himself with special reference to the question of righteousness reduces the difference to terms of glory: "For if the ministry of condemnation is glory, much rather does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory." In a broad sense the Old Testament was the economy of conviction of sin. The law revealed the moral helplessness of man, placed him under a curse, worked death. There was, of course, Gospel under and in the Old Covenant, but it was for its expression largely dependent on the silent symbolic language of altar and sacrifice and lustration. Under it the glory which speaks of righteousness was in hiding. In the New Covenant all this has been changed. The veil has been rent, and through it an unobstructed view is obtained of the glory of God on the face of Jesus Christ. And with this vision comes the assurance of atonement, satisfaction, access to God, peace of conscience, liberty, eternal life. For Paul the commission to proclaim these things constitutes no small part of the excellence of his task. As Jesus delighted in announcing release to the captives, in setting at liberty them that were bruised, in proclaiming the acceptable year of Jehovah, so Paul, even more because of the accomplishment of the redemptive work, rejoiced in the ministry of reconciliation. Beautiful to him upon the mountains were the feet of them that bring good tidings, that publish peace.



The fifth and principal reason why the service of the New Covenant excels in honor, Paul finds in this: that the Christ-glory is a living and self-communicating power, transforming both those who mediate it and those who receive it from glory to glory into the likeness of the Lord. Paul here again has in mind the difference between Moses and himself. Moses' own condition and appearance were only externally and temporarily affected by the vision on the mount. After a while his face became as before. And what he was unable to retain for himself he was unable to communicate unto others. Over against this the Apostle places the two facts, first that the servants of the New Covenant are internally and permanently transformed by beholding the image of the Lord, and second that they effect a similar transformation in others to whom through their ministry the knowledge of the glorified Savior comes. In its first part this representation was doubtless connected with the Apostle's personal experience. There had been a point in his life at which the perception of the glorified Lord had been for him attended with the most marvelous change it is possible to undergo. The glory that shone around him on the road to Damascus had in one moment, in the twinkling of an eye, swept away all his old beliefs and ideals, his sinful passion and pride, and made of him a new creature, to whom the past things were like the faint memory of some distant phase of existence. And what had happened there, Paul had afterwards seen repeating itself thousands of times, less

conspicuously, to be sure, but not on that account less truly, less miraculously. To express this aspect of his ministry he employs the formula, that it is a ministry of the Spirit, that is of the Holy Spirit, whereas that of Moses was one of the letter. The Spirit stands for the living, energizing, creative grace of God, the letter for the inability of the law as such to translate itself into action. Now in saying that the ministry of the New Covenant is a ministry of the glory of Christ and that it is a ministry of the Spirit Paul is not really affirming two different things but one and the same fact. The glory and the Spirit to him are identical. As we have seen the glory means the equipment, with supernatural power and splendor, of the exalted Christ. And this equipment, described from the point of view of its energizing source, consists of the Holy Spirit. It was at the resurrection that the Spirit in this high, unique sense was received by Him. There the Spirit transformed the Lord's human nature and made it glorious beyond conception. Besides this, the Spirit is with Christ in continuance as the indwelling principle, the element, as it were, in which the glorified life of the Savior is lived. We need not wonder, then, that a little later the Apostle gives almost paradoxical expression to this truth by declaring, "The Lord is the Spirit," and that we are transformed from "the Lord, the Spirit." This language is not, of course, intended to efface the distinction between the Second and the Third Persons of the Trinity, but simply serves to bring out the practical inseparableness of the exalted Christ and

the Holy Spirit in the work of salvation. So we begin to understand at least a little of the mystery, how the glory of Christ can communicate itself to and reproduce itself in the believer and transform him. As Spirit-glory it cannot fail to do this, for it is of the nature of the Spirit so to act. Hence also we read elsewhere that Christ "became a quickening Spirit." The main point to be observed, however, is how all this adds to the high conception held by Paul about the honor of his ministry as compared with that of Moses. The minister of the law, the letter, can never taste that sweetest joy of seeing the message he brings incarnate and reincarnate itself in the lives of others. The minister of the New Covenant does taste of this joy: he writes with the Spirit of the living God in tables that are hearts of flesh. This means more than what we sometimes speak of and feel as pleasure in the consciousness of power set free or good accomplished. Paul undoubtedly knew this also, but to confine what he here describes to that would rob it of its most distinctive quality. Paul had the sensation of coming through his ministry into the closest touch with the forthputting of the saving energy of God Himself. He was aware that to his preaching of the Gospel there belonged an invisible background, that at every step his presentation of the truth was accompanied by a ministry from heaven conducted by the Christ of glory. His work was for him imbued with divine power, the life-blood of the supernatural pulsed through it. His service, at each point where it touched men, marked the

line and opened channels for the introduction of divine creative forces into human souls. So vivid was this consciousness of involvement in the supernatural, that nothing short of a comparison of God's word through him with the divine word at the first creation could adequately express it to Paul's mind: "God who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts for the purpose of our imparting the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ." Nor was this close participation with God in a transforming spiritual process something glorious merely in itself. Paul also took into account its comprehensive effect. When the Apostle says "we all are transformed" it is evident that the statement is not limited to the Apostles or preachers of the Gospel, but includes, so far at least as the passive experience is concerned, all believers. To the joyous consciousness of exerting extraordinary power there was added the delight of witnessing extraordinary results. There is a note of genuine Christian universalism in this. It was a reason for profound satisfaction to Paul that he needed not stand in the midst of the congregation of God as another Moses, partaking of a light from God in which the others could not share, solitary in his splendor, but that the larger share of what he affirmed of himself had through him become the possession of the simplest believer, a transfiguration of spirit like his own by the beholding of the Lord. Refracted from numberless mirrors the light multiplied and intensified itself



for each on whom it fell. Nevertheless even so a measure of incommunicable distinction remained. Since the reproduction into the likeness of Christ is dependent on and proportionate to the vision of the Savior, and since this vision from the nature of the case is more constantly present to the minister of the Gospel than to the common believer, it follows that in the former an altogether unique result may be expected. So it was undoubtedly with Paul. He had no need of testing the principle in others; a more direct and convincing evidence lay in its effect upon himself. He was aware of a renewal of the inner man, progressing from day to day, and in which there was observable this law of increase, that the more he did to make Christ known, the deeper the lineaments of the character of Christ were impressed upon his soul. Even the hardships befalling his flesh in the service of the Lord were contributory to this: "We are always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." And: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." "Therefore we faint not, though our outward man decay, yet the inner man is renewed day by day." Thus the Apostle's ministry, while exercised upon others, became unto him an unintermittent ministry to his own soul, ever increasingly assimilating him to the glory of Christ.

Such was Paul's conception of the ministry of the New Covenant. It bears upon its face



the marks of the historical situation in which he was called upon to present it. None the less it has abiding validity, for it is drawn from the nature of the Gospel itself, and the Gospel is the Gospel of Him who remains the same yesterday and today and forever. Even of the errors over against which Paul placed these glorious views it is in a certain sense true that they are not of one age but of all ages; they lead a life of pseudo-immortality among men. In the Judaistic controversy which shook the early church, forces and tendencies were at work deeply rooted in the sinful human heart. In modernized apparel they confront us still to the present day. There are still abroad forms of a Christless Gospel. There prevails still a subtle form of legalism which would rob the Savior of his crown of glory, earned by the cross, and would make of Him a second Moses, offering us the stones of the law instead of the life-bread of the Gospel. And, oh the pity and shame of it, the Jesus that is being preached but too often is a Christ after the flesh, a religious genius, the product of evolution, powerless to save! Let us pray that it may be given to the Church to repudiate and cast out this error with the resoluteness of Paul. There is need for her ministers of placing themselves ever afresh in the light of the great Apostolic consciousness revealed in our text. They should learn once more to bear their message out of the fulness of conviction that it is an unchangeable message, reliable as the veracity of God Himself. Grant God that it may become on the lips of his ser-

vants more truly from age to age a Gospel from which the name of Christ crowds out every other human name, good tidings of atonement and righteousness and supernatural renewal; to preacher and people alike, what it was to Paul and his converts, a mirror of vision and transfiguration after the image of the Lord.

## **VI. Heavenly-Mindedness**

*The Epistle to the Hebrews,  
XI, 9, 10: "By faith he became a  
sojourner in the land of promise,  
as in a land not his own, dwelling  
in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the  
heirs with him of the same prom-  
ise; for he looked for the city  
which has the foundations, whose  
builder and maker is God."*

THE chapter from which our text is taken is pre-eminently the chapter on faith. It illustrates the nature, power and effects of this grace in a series of examples from sacred history. In the context the prophecy of Habakkuk is quoted: "The righteous shall live by faith." We remember that in the Epistle to the Romans and Galatians also the same prophecy appears with prominence. Abraham likewise there figures as the great example of faith. In consequence one might easily be led to think that the development of the idea of faith in these Epistles and in our chapter moves along identical lines. This would be only partially correct. Although the two types of teaching are in perfect accord, and touch each other at certain points, yet the angle of vision is not the same. In Romans and Galatians faith is in the main trust in the grace of God, the instrument of justification, the channel through which the vital influences flowing from Christ are received by the believer. Here in Hebrews the conception is wider; faith is "the proving of things not seen, the assurance of things hoped for." It is the organ for apprehension of unseen and future realities, giving access to and contact with another world. It is the hand stretched out through the vast distances of space and time, whereby the Christian draws to himself the things far beyond, so that they become actual to him. The earlier Epistles are not unfamiliar



with this aspect of faith. Paul in II Corinthians declares that for the present the Christian walks through a land of faith and not of sight. And on the other hand this chapter is not unfamiliar with the justifying function of faith, for we are told of Noah, that he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Nevertheless, taking the two representations as a whole, the distinctness of the point of view in each should not be neglected. It can be best appreciated by observing that, while in these other writings Christ is the object of faith, the One towards whom the sinner's trust is directed, here the Savior is described as Himself exercising faith, in fact as the one perfect, ideal believer. The writer exhorts his readers: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the leader and perfecter of our faith." Faith in that other sense of specific trust, through which a guilty sinner becomes just in the sight of God, our Lord could not exercise, because He was sinless. But the faith that is an assurance of things hoped for and a proving of things not seen had a large place in his experience. By very reason of the contrast between the higher world to which He belonged and this dark lower world of suffering and death to which He had surrendered Himself it could not be otherwise than that faith, as a projection of his soul into the unseen and future, should have been the fundamental habit of the earthly life of his human nature, and should have developed in Him a degree of intensity not attained elsewhere. But, although,

for the reason stated, in the unique case of Jesus the two types of faith did not go together, they by no means exclude each other in the mind of the Christian. For, after all, justifying faith is but a special application in one particular direction of the frame of mind here described. Among all the realities of the invisible world, mediated to us by the disclosures and promises of God, and to which our faith responds, there is none that more strongly calls into action this faculty for grasping the unseen than the divine pronouncement through the Gospel, that, though sinners, we are righteous in the judgment of God. That is not only the invisible, it seems the impossible; it is the paradox of all paradoxes; it requires a unique energy of believing; it is the supreme victory of faith over the apparent reality of things; it credits God with calling the things that are not as though they were; it penetrates more deeply into the deity of God than any other act of faith.

What we read in this chapter about the various activities and acts of faith in the lives of the Old Testament saints might perhaps at first create the impression, that the word faith is used in a looser sense, and that many things are attributed to it not strictly belonging there on the author's own definition. One might be inclined in more precise language to classify them with other Christian graces. There is certainly large variety of costume in the procession that is made to pass before our eyes. The understanding that the worlds were framed out of nothing, the ability to offer God an acceptable

sacrifice, the experience of translation unto God, the preparing of the ark, the responsiveness to the call to leave one's country, the power to conceive seed when past age, the willingness to sacrifice an only son, Joseph's making mention beforehand of the deliverance from Egypt, and his giving commandment concerning his bones, the hiding of the child Moses, the choice by Moses, when grown up, of the reproach of God's people in preference to the treasures of Egypt, all this and more is represented as belonging to the one rubric of faith. But let us not misunderstand the writer. When he affirms that by faith all these things were suffered and done, his idea is not that what is enumerated was in each case the direct expression of faith. What he means is that in the last analysis faith alone made possible every one of the acts described, that as an underlying frame of mind it enabled all these other graces to function, and to produce the rich fruitage here set forth. The obedience, the self-sacrifice, the patience, the fortitude, of all these the exercise in the profound Christian sense would have been impossible, if the saints had not had through faith their eye firmly fixed on the unseen and promised world. Whether the call was to believe or to follow, to do or to bear, the obedience to it sprang not from any earth-fed sources but from the infinite reservoir of strength stored up in the mountain-land above. If Moses endured it was not due to the power of resistance in his human frame, but because the weakness in him was compensated by the vision of Him who is invisible. If Abraham,

who had gladly received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son, it was not because in heroic resignation he steeled himself to obedience, but because through faith he saw God as greater and stronger than the most inexorable physical law of nature: "For he accounted that God is able to raise up even from the dead." And so in all the other instances. Through faith the powers of the higher world were placed at the disposal of those whom this world threatened to overwhelm, and so the miracle resulted that from weakness they were made strong. No mistake could be greater than to naturalize the contents of this chapter, and to conceive of the thing portrayed as some instinct of idealism, some sort of sixth sense for what lies above the common plane of life, as people speak of men of vision, who see farther than the mass. The entire description rests on the basis of supernaturalism; these are annals of grace, *magnalia Christi*. Even the most illustrious names in the history of worldly achievement are not, as such, entitled to a place among them. This is the goodly company of patriarchs and prophets and saints, who endured the reproach of Christ, of whom the world was not worthy, who form the line of succession through which the promises passed, who now compose the cloud of witnesses that encompass our mortal strife, men of whom God is not ashamed to be called their God, with whom the Savior Himself is associated as the leader and finisher of the same faith.

In our text, however, we meet faith in its



more simple and direct mode of operation. It appears as dealing with the unseen and future. From the life of the patriarchs the more militant, strenuous features are absent. In their lives it is allowed as in a region of seclusion and quietness to unfold before our eyes its simple beauty. Faith is here but another name for other-worldliness or heavenly-mindedness. Herein lies the reason why the writer dwells with such evident delight upon this particular part of the Old Testament narrative. The other figures he merely sketches, and with a rapid skillful stroke of the brush puts in the high lights of their lives where the glory of faith illumined them. But the figure of Abraham he paints with the lingering, caressing hand of love, so that something of the serenity and peacefulness of the original patriarchal story is reproduced in the picture: "By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The charm spread over this part of the subject to the author's vision also appears in this, that, after having already dismissed it and passed on to the portrayal of Abraham's faith in another form, as connected with the seed of the promise, he involuntarily returns to cast one more loving glance at it: "They died in faith, not having received the promises, but seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For



they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of the country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared them a city."

The other-worldliness of the patriarchs showed itself in this, that they confessed to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It found its visible expression in their dwelling in tents. Not strangers and pilgrims outside of Canaan, but strangers and pilgrims in the earth. The writer places all the emphasis on this, that they pursued their tent-life in the very land of promise, which was their own, as in a land not their own. Only in this way is a clear connection between the staying in tents and the looking forward to heaven obtained. For otherwise the tents might have signified merely that they considered themselves not at home when away from the holy land. If even in Canaan they carried within themselves the consciousness of pilgrimage then it becomes strikingly evident that it was a question of fundamental, comprehensive choice between earth and heaven. The adherence to the tent-life in the sight and amidst the scenes of the promised land fixes the aspiration of the patriarchs as aiming at the highest conceivable heavenly goal. It has in it somewhat of the scorn of the relative and of compromise. He who knows that for him a palace is in building does not dally with desires for improvement

on a lower scale. Contentment with the lowest becomes in such a case profession of the highest, a badge of spiritual aristocracy with its proud insistence upon the ideal. Only the predestined inhabitants of the eternal city know how to conduct themselves in a simple tent as kings and princes of God.

As to its negative side, the feeling of strangeness on earth, even in Canaan, the writer could base his representation on the statement of Abraham to the sons of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," and on the words of the aged Jacob to Pharaoh: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." As to the positive side, the desire for a heavenly state, there is no such explicit testimony in the narrative of Genesis. None the less the author was fully justified in affirming this also. It is contained by implication in the other. The refusal to build an abiding habitation in a certain place must be due to the recognition that one's true, permanent abode is elsewhere. The not-feeling-at-home in one country has for its inevitable counterpart homesickness for another. The writer plainly ascribes this to the patriarchs, and in doing so also ascribes to them a degree of acquaintance with the idea of a heavenly life. His meaning is not that, unknown to themselves, they symbolized through their mode of living the principle of destination for heaven. On the

contrary, we are expressly told that they confessed, that they made it manifest, that they looked for, that they desired. There existed with them an intelligent and outspoken apprehension of the celestial world. Let us not say that such an interpretation of their minds is unhistorical, because they could not in that age have possessed a clear knowledge of the world to come. Rather, in reading this chapter on faith let us have faith, a large, generous faith in the uniqueness and spiritual distinction of the patriarchs as confessors, perhaps in advance of their time, of the heaven-centered life of the people of God. In other respects also Scripture represents the patriarchal period as lifted above the average level of the surrounding ages, even within the sphere of Special Revelation. Paul tells us that in the matter of grace and freedom from the law Abraham lived on a plane and in an atmosphere much higher than that of subsequent generations. Anachronisms these things are, if you will, but anachronisms of God, who does not let Himself be bound by time, but, seeing the end from the beginning, reserves the right to divide the flood of history, and to place on conspicuous islands at successive points great luminaries of his truth and grace shining far out into the future. The patriarchs had their vision of the heavenly country, a vision in the light of which the excellence or desirableness of every earthly home and country paled. Acquaintance with a fairer Canaan had stolen from their hearts the love of the land that lay spread around like a garden of paradise.

Of course, it does not necessarily follow from this that the author credits the patriarchs with a detailed, concrete knowledge of the heavenly world. In point of heavenly-mindedness he holds them up as models to be imitated. In point of information about the content of the celestial life he places the readers far above the reach of the Old Testament at its highest. To the saints of the New Covenant life and immortality and all the powers of the world to come have been opened up by Christ. The Christian state is as truly part and prelibation of the things above as a portal forms part of the house. If not wholly within, we certainly are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. And in this we are more than Abraham. No such Gospel broke in upon the solitude of these ancient shepherds, not even upon Jacob, when he saw the ladder reaching up into heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. But do you not see, that precisely on account of this difference in knowledge the faculty of faith had addressed to it a stronger challenge than it has in us, who pilgrim with heaven's door wide open in our sight? For this reason it is so profitable to return again and again to this part of the Old Testament Scriptures, and learn what great faith could do with less privilege, how precisely because it had such limited resource of knowledge, it made a sublimer flight, soaring with supreme dominion up to the highest heights of God.

Let us try briefly to analyze what this otherworldliness of the patriarchs involved, and in



what respects it will be well for us to cultivate it. The first feature to be noted is that it is not essentially negative but positive in character. The core lies not in what it relinquishes but in what it seeks. Escape from the world here below and avoidance of the evil in the world do not furnish its primary motive. That is true only of the abnormal, morbid type of other-worldliness, that connected with pessimism and monastic seclusion. From an unwarranted identification with these the true grace portrayed by Scripture has been exposed to much ill-considered criticism and fallen into disrepute. If heavenly-mindedness were an upward flight in the ignominious sense of the word, it would be the very opposite to the heroism of genuine faith, a seeking for a harbor of refuge, instead of a steering for the haven of home. Do not misunderstand me. It is only right that in some measure the bitter experience of sin and evil should contribute to the Christian's desire for heaven. The attraction of heaven is in part the attraction of freedom from sin. And not a little of the contempt poured upon it, while pretending to protest against cloistered withdrawal, springs in reality from a defective perception of the seriousness of sin. Where the eye has not by divine grace been opened to the world's wickedness, it is easy to look with disdain on the Christian's world-shyness. But the Christian, who knows that the end of sin cannot come until the end of this world, looks at the question in a light of his own. He is fully warranted in considering ridicule of this kind part of the re-



proach of Christ and bearing it with joy. Nor should we forget, that an excess of interest in the present life, when shown in the name of religion, is apt, in our day, to be a symptom of doubt or unbelief in regard to the life to come. Still the principle remains in force, that the desirability of heaven should never possess exclusively or mainly negative significance. It is not something first brought into the religious mind through sin. The lineage and birth-right of other-worldliness are of the oldest and noblest. By God Himself this traveler's unrest was implanted in the soul. Ever since the goal set by the Covenant of Works came within his ken, man carries with him in all his converse with this world the sense of appurtenance to another. This is but to say that supernaturalism forms from the outset the basis of true religion in man. Man belongs to two spheres. And Scripture not only teaches that these two spheres are distinct, it also teaches what estimate of relative importance ought to be placed upon them. Heaven is the primordial, earth the secondary creation. In heaven are the supreme realities; what surrounds us here below is a copy and shadow of the celestial things. Because the relation between the two spheres is positive, and not negative, not mutually repulsive, heavenly-mindedness can never give rise to neglect of the duties pertaining to the present life. It is the ordinance and will of God, that not apart from, but on the basis of, and in contact with, the earthly sphere man shall work out his heavenly destiny. Still the lower may never supplant the higher in

our affections. In the heart of man time calls for eternity, earth for heaven. He must, if normal, seek the things above, as the flower's face is attracted by the sun, and the water-courses are drawn to the ocean. Heavenly-mindedness, so far from blunting or killing the natural desires, produces in the believer a finer organization, with more delicate sensibilities, larger capacities, a stronger pulse of life. It does not spell empoverishment, but enrichment of nature. The spirit of the entire Epistle shows this. The use of the words "city" and "country" is evidence of it. These are terms that stand for the accumulation, the efflorescence, the intensive enjoyment of values. Nor should we overlook the social note in the representation. A perfect communion in a perfect society is promised. In the city of the living God believers are joined to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and mingle with the spirits of just men made perfect. And all this faith recognizes. It does not first need the storms and stress that invade to quicken its desire for such things. Being the sum and substance of all the positive gifts of God to us in their highest form, heaven is of itself able to evoke in our hearts positive love, such absorbing love as can render us at times forgetful of the earthly strife. In such moments the transcendent beauty of the other shore and the irresistible current of our deepest life lift us above every regard of wind or wave. We know that through weather fair or foul our ship is bound straight for its eternal port.

Next to the positiveness of its object the high degree of actuality in the working of this grace should be considered. Through the faith of heavenly-mindedness the things above reveal themselves to the believer, are present with him, and communicate themselves to him. Though as yet a pilgrim, the Christian is never wholly separated from the land of promise. His tents are pitched in close view of the city of God. Heaven is present to the believer's experience in no less real a sense than Canaan with its fair hills and valleys lay close to the vision of Abraham. He walks in the light of the heavenly world and is made acquainted with the kindred spirits inhabiting it. And since the word "actual" in its literal sense means "that which works," the life above possesses for the believer the highest kind of actuality. He is given to taste the powers of the world to come, as Abraham breathed the air of Canaan, and was refreshed by the dews descending on its fields. The roots of the Christian's life are fed from those rich and perennial springs that lie deep in the recesses of converse with God, where prayers ascend and divine graces descend, so that after each season of tryst he issues, a new man, from the secrecy of his tent. Because it had this effect for the patriarchs, faith had so intimately joined to it the exercise of hope. It is no less the assurance of things hoped for than the proving of things not seen. It annihilates the distance of time as much as of space. If faith deals with heaven as it exists, hope seizes upon it as it will be at the end. Hope attaches itself

to promises; it sees and greets from afar. As the Epistle describes it, it does not contemplate purely provisional and earthly developments, does not come to rest in the happenings of intermediate ages, but relates to the end. In one unbroken flight it soars to the goal of God's work in history, which is none other than the finished heaven. For heaven itself is subject to a process of preparation, so that its full content became accessible only to the patriarchs through a projection of their faith in time. The heaven for which they hoped was the heaven of redemption, enriched through the ages, become peopled with the successive generations of the saints of God, filled with the glory of Christ, the recreated paradise, towards which all the streams of grace springing up in time send their waters. The believer requires this new heaven, not simply the cosmical place that resulted from the first creation. Hence his heavenly-mindedness can never destroy interest in the unfolding of the ways of God throughout the history of the present world. Neither grows he impatient when the promise seems to tarry. For his hope also is in him a vitalizing power. It lives by the things that are not as though they were already, and makes the future supply strength for the present. Amidst all the vicissitudes of time the Christian knows that the foundations of the city of God are being quietly laid, that its walls are rising steadily, and that it will at last stand finished in all its golden glory, the crowning product of the work of God for his own.

But the faith of heavenly-mindedness in yet



another, even profounder, sense surmounts time. In contrast with what is transitory it lays hold of the unchanging and eternal. The text expresses this by describing the city looked for as the city which has the foundations. The difference between the well-founded enduring edifice and the frail, collapsible tent has induced this turn of the figure. Already in the prophet Isaiah Jehovah declares: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a precious cornerstone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." In this word the two ideas of sure foundation and faith are brought into close connection. Because the foundation is sure the believer can lay aside all disquietude and impatience in regard to the working out of the divine purpose. He need not make haste. It is of the essence of faith to crave assurance; hence it cannot come to rest until it have cast its anchor into the eternal. And heaven above all else partakes of the character of eternity. It is the realm of the unchangeable. In this lower world Time with its law of attrition is king. Nothing can escape his inexorable rule. What is must cease to be, what appears must vanish, what is built must be broken down, even though human heart should cherish it more than its own life. And this applies not merely to objects of natural affection; it involves also much that is of transitory purpose in the service and Church of God. Even our religion in its earthly exercise is not exempt from the tragical aspect borne by all existence in time. The summons comes again and again: "Get thee out of thy country, and



from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," and after a brief spell of comfort and delight we anew find ourselves in tents roaming through an inhospitable world. There is no help for these things. Like Abraham we must resolutely confess, that we are strangers and pilgrims in a land of time, and that the best this land can offer us is but a caravanserai to tarry in for a day and a night. Abraham would have undoubtedly rejoiced in the vision of the historical Jerusalem around which gather so many glories of God's redemptive work. But, suppose it had risen up before him in all its beauty, would that have been the soul-satisfying vision his faith desired? No, there is neither quietness nor repose for the believer's heart except on the bosom of eternity. There and there alone is shelter from the relentless pursuit of change. The inspired writer tells us that the two most momentous events in sacred history, the giving of the law on Sinai and the end of the world, signify the removal of things that are shaken, in order that such things as are not shakable may remain. And the second shaking is so radical and comprehensive that it involves not only the earth but likewise the heavens: it will sweep the transitory out of the life of the people of God even in the higher regions, and will leave them, when the smoke and dust of the upheaval are blown away, in a clear atmosphere of eternal life. But in this sense also faith is not purely prospective: it enables to anticipate; it draws down the imperishable substance of eternity into its vessel of time and feeds on it. The believer knows that

even now there is in him that which has been freed from the law of change, a treasure that moth and rust cannot corrupt, true riches enshrined in his heart as in a treasury of God. Have we ever been impressed in reading the narrative of Genesis by the peacefulness and serenity enveloping the figures of the patriarchs? There is something else here besides the idyllic charm of rural surroundings. What enviable freedom from the unrest, the impatience, the feverish excitement of the children of this world! Our modern Christian life so often lacks the poise and stability of the eternal. Religion has come so overmuch to occupy itself with the things of time that it catches the spirit of time. Its purposes turn fickle and unsteady; its methods become superficial and ephemeral; it alters its course so constantly; it borrows so readily from sources beneath itself, that it undermines its own prestige in matters pertaining to the eternal world. Where lies the remedy? It would be useless to seek it in withdrawal from the struggles of this present world. The true corrective lies in this, that we must learn again to carry a heaven-fed and heaven-centered spirit into our walk and work below. The grand teaching of the Epistle that through Christ and the New Covenant the heavenly projects into the earthly, as the headlands of a continent project into the ocean, should be made fruitful for the whole tone and temper of our Christian service. Every task should be at the same time a means of grace from and an incentive to work for heaven. There has been One greater than

Abraham, who lived his life in absolute harmony with this principle, in whom the fullest absorption in his earthly calling could not for a moment disturb the consciousness of being a child of heaven. Though, like unto the patriarchs, He had no permanent home, not even a tent, this was not in his case the result of a break with an earthly-minded past. It was natural to Him. In his mind were perfectly united the two hemispheres of supernaturalism, that of the source of power back of, and that of the eternal goal of life beyond every work. A religion that has ceased to set its face towards the celestial city, is bound sooner or later to discard also all supernatural resources in its endeavor to transform this present world. The days are perhaps not far distant when we shall find ourselves confronted with a quasi-form of Christianity professing openly to place its dependence on and to work for the present life alone, a religion, to use the language of Hebrews, become profane and a fornicator like Esau, selling for a mess of earthly pottage its heavenly birth-right.

There are two more aspects of the patriarchal faith of heavenly-mindedness to be briefly considered. The first is its spirituality. Heavenly-mindedness is spiritual-mindedness. This pervades like an atmosphere the entire Epistle. We have already seen that even in the promised land the patriarchs remained tent-dwellers. God had a wise purpose in thus postponing for them personally the fulfilment of the temporal promise. Although Canaan was a goodly land, it was yet, after all, material and not

of that higher substance we call spiritual. While capable of carrying up the mind to supernal regions, it also exposed to the danger of becoming satisfied with the blessing in its provisional form. That this danger was not imaginary the later history of Israel testifies. In order to guard against such a result in the case of the patriarchs God withheld from them the land and its riches and made of this denial a powerful spiritualizing discipline. By it they were led to reflect that, since the promise was theirs beyond all doubt, and yet they were not allowed to inherit it in its material form, that therefore it must in the last analysis relate to something far higher and different, something of which the visible and sensual is a mere image. Thus the conception of another sphere of being was introduced into their minds: henceforth they sought the better country. Not as if the things of sense were worthless in themselves, but because they knew of something transcendent that claimed their supreme affection. Their tastes and enjoyments had been raised to another plane. The refinement of grace had been imparted to them. For bodily hands there had been, as it were, substituted spiritual antennae, sensitive to intangible things. They had come to a mountain that could not be touched and yet could be felt. In all the treasures and promises of religion the one valuable thing is this spiritual core. In the word that God speaks we can taste all his goodness and grace. Hope itself is spiritualized, remaining no longer the hope of imagination but grasping in God the ideal root



from which the whole future must spring and blossom in due time. The heavenly world does not appear desirable as simply a second improved edition of this life; that would be nothing else than earthly-mindedness projected into the future. The very opposite takes place: heaven spiritualizes in advance our present walk with God. Each time faith soars and alights behind the veil it brings back on its wings some of the subtle fragrance that there prevails. This also is an important principle in need of stress at the present day. If there is danger of Christianity being temporalized, there is no less danger of its being materialized. How easily do we fall into the habit of handling the things of our holy faith after an external, quantitative, statistical fashion, so that they turn flesh under our touch and emit a savor of earth? If at any time or in any form this fault should threaten to befall us, let us revisit the tents of the patriarchs and rehearse the lesson, that in religion the body without the soul is worthless and without power.

The other point to be observed is this, that heaven is the normal goal of our redemption. We all know that religion is older than redemption. At the same time the experience of redemption is the summit of religion. The two have become so interwoven that the Christian cannot conceive of a future state from which the redemptive mould and color would be absent. The deepest and dearest in us is so much the product of salvation, that the vision of God as such and the vision of God our Savior melt into



one. We could not separate them if we would. The simple reason is that precisely in redeeming us God has revealed to us the inmost essence of his deity. No one but a redeemed creature can truly know what it is for God to be God, and what it means to worship and possess Him as God. This is the fine gold of the Christian's experience, sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb. The river that makes glad the city of God is the river of grace. The believer's mind and heart will only in heaven compass the full riches, the length and breadth and depth and height of the love of God. No one can drink so deeply of it here, but he will more deeply drink hereafter. Blessed be God, no stream of Lethe flows this side of his city to wash away from our minds the remembrance of redeeming grace! The life above will be a ceaseless coming to Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel. The Lamb slain for our sins will be all the glory of Emmanuel's land.

Finally the highest thing that can be spoken about this city is that it is the city of our God, that He is in the midst of it. Traced to its ultimate root heavenly-mindedness is the thirst of the soul after God, the living God. The patriarchs looked not for some city in general, but for a city whose builder and maker was God. It is characteristic of faith that it not merely desires the perfect but desires the perfect as a work and gift of God. A heaven that was not illumined by the light of God, and not a place for closest embrace of Him, would be less than

heaven. God as builder and maker thereof has put the better part of Himself into his work. Therefore those who enter the city are in God. The thought is none other than that of the seer in the Apocalypse: "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. And that city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the throne of God and the Lamb are therein: and his servants shall do Him service, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads." And the faith is the faith of the Psalmist, who spoke: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Here it is impossible for us to tell how truly and to what extent our relation to God is a relation of pure, disinterested love in which we seek Him for his own sake. There, when all want and sin-frailty shall have slipped away from us, we shall be able to tell. It was because God discerned in the souls of the patriarchs, underneath all else, this personal love, this homesickness for Himself, that He caused to be recorded about them the greatest thing that can be spoken of any man: that God is not ashamed to be called their God, and that He has prepared for them the city of their desire.





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